Abhinavagupta's Hermeneutics of the Absolute

Anuttaraprakriyā

An Interpretation of his Parātriśikā Vivaraṇa

Bettina Bäumer



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Triśula with Kālī, Tanjore Region, 10th century.

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Foreword by
André Padoux



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Dedicated to
Swami Lakshman Joo
Śaivācārya of Kashmir
(1907-1991)
the last Master of Anuttara Trika

संकोचयन्ति हृदयं नहि शास्त्रपाशा
नो संविदं कलुषयेद्यदयं च लोकः।
सम्यक्स्वभावपदवीपरिपूर्णरूपा
सैवोल्लसल्लयभरा भरिता स्थितिः स्यात्।।

saṁkocayanti hṛdayaṁ nahi śāstrapāśā
no saṁvidaṁ kaluṣayedyadayaṁ ca lokaḥ ।
samyaksvabhāvapadavīparipūrṇarūpā
saivollasallayabharā bharitā sthitiḥ syāt ॥

The bonds of Śāstras cannot constrict the Heart,
nor can this world contaminate consciousness.
May there be the state of absolute Fullness
filled with absorption flashing forth,
the true natural path of the essence of Plenitude

Foreword

This study by Bettina Bäumer is important and welcome because it deals with what may well be considered as the very core — metaphysically and mystically — of Abhinavagupta's teaching, and of what he still can tell and teach us. Its importance is, of course and foremost, due to the fact that it deals with a work by Abhinavagupta who — as Bettina Bäumer forcefully says in her introduction — is undoubtedly one of the most remarkable, "extraordinary," thinkers of India — perhaps the most exceptional one by the breadth of his interests and talents, his acumen and profoundness. He was also a master of Sanskrit — a Sanskrit sometimes difficult to decipher, because both of an idiosyncratic style and of the subtlety of the thought it expresses — and Sanskrit has the pride of place in the Parātrīśikavivaraṇa (PTV) several of whose main conceptions bearing on linguistic-phonetic elements: phonemes, syllables (*varṇa, akṣara*), or *mantras*. Typically Indian, indeed, in this respect, was Abhinavagupta. For no other culture than the Indian one has given the same importance to speech or language — here in the form of Sanskrit — speculating endlessly during centuries on its constitutive elements, its organisation, uses and powers. Not by chance did the first ever systematic — one could say scientific — description of a language, Pāṇini's grammar, appear in India.

Such metaphysical-linguistic speculations (linked to ritual) are essential in the PTV, more than half of the thirty-six stanzas of the Parātrīśikā (PT) concerning the subject. For the PT, the path to the Supreme, *anuttara*, to liberation, is the spiritual-mental, *cum* bodily and ritual, experience and mastery of a *mantra*, the *hṛdayabīja SAUḤ*. Very typically Tantric (we may note) are the PT and the *vivaraṇa* in this global approach; for if the condition aimed at by the adept is spiritual, transcendental, it is experienced, 'lived,' mentally and corporally by an incarnate person, living in this world, an adept or devotee performing rites. These are not mere accessory concrete elements to a purely spiritual quest. The quest, surely, is spiritual — and this is the fundamental aspect which is the theme of this hermeneutical study. But it is the quest of a human being, not of a purely spiritual

entity. Hence the importance of concrete elements, linguistic or ritual, uttered, visualised, or both intellectually and bodily acted out — the linguistic elements, when they are *mantras*, being themselves ritually "extracted," then animated and put into action by rites which, being Tantric, consist as much in mental visualisations as in actions. What takes place is the transformative total experience of a living being.

One might, in this connection, note that what the Goddess asks for in the first stanza of the PT is how *khecarīsamatā* is to attain: how to penetrate, that is, in *kha*, in the central mystical void within the heart. This is a spiritual, mystical, process. But, in early Tantras such as the Brahmayāmalā/Picumata, one meets Khecarīs, which are a class of Yoginīs moving in the space who can bestow supernatural powers. Later, the Krama tradition saw the creation of the world as being due to four forms of divine power imagined as swirling wheels of energy (*śakticakra*) whose movements create and animate not only the cosmos but also the senses and the mind of human beings, the highest of these being *khecarī*, a conception taken over by Abhinavagupta as appears in the gloss on *khecarīsamatām* of the PTV (pp.39 ff. of the Kashmir Series edition). If *khecarī* can be in a state of equilibrium (*samatā*), she is nevertheless made up of the senses and their objects. She is characterised by "the fluctuations of passion, anger, and so forth" (*śaiva khecarī kāmakrodhādirūpatayā vaiṣamyeṇa lakṣyate*). Her equilibrium therefore is charged with power. It is not a peaceful calm, but the intensity of dominated power. This is what a Tantric adept is looking for. The Tantric liberated person is a *siddha*: transcending this world but also dominating it. Abhinavagupta, when he is described as a living person (apocryphally, of course, but not without plausibility), is not shown as an ascetic world-renouncing *sādhu*, but on the contrary as enjoying many worldly pleasures. He was an aesthetician; an aesthete too, we may presume. The world of Tantra is a world of passion. Passions dominated, of course, but passions made use of to reach what is beyond them, but includes them. The Tantric case as a way of life is a case of particular, extreme, intensity. In this respect it differs from other traditions which are also ways of life. We may also note here in passing that all philosophies are ways of life, as was underlined by Pierre Hadot (who I was happy to see quoted in the introduction).[1]

1. Pierre Hadot taught classical philosophy in the Collège de France during several years. He died in April 2010, aged 88.

Am I here contradicting the main theme of this excellent book? Of course, not! I merely take the opportunity of this preface to evoke some aspects of the Tantric domain I happened to study. My approach differs from Bettina Bäumer's more on details or orientation than on essentials. Ours is an old friendship. I have known Bettina Bäumer when she was still a young scholar. We worked together for some time in a research unit of the CNRS. We have remained friends and colleagues ever since, exploring, each in his/her own way, the same domain, treading in some respects the same not always easy path. We have both worked with Swami Lakshman Joo, I however much more briefly than Bettina, never being as near to him as she was and still is. My somewhat different approach to some problems does not prevent me from fully appreciating the present work. We differ but sometimes converge: this is the case here. Her hermeneutical approach of the PTV is, I feel, very fruitful both in setting out and clarifying Abhinavagupta's meaning, and in bringing out what it can still say to us. In this respect, her approach will prove very useful. I confess to being all the more ready to commend this approach, and the fact that it concerns Abhinavagupta's thought, because Indian philosophers of today seem to be either fascinated by Śaṅkara's *advaita* as if it were the acme of Indian philosophical thought, which, whatever its merits, I believe it is not, or, when they develop a philosophical stance of their own, to be mere epigones of the analytical thought the British have inherited from Vienna — a less 'philosophical' form of thought being hard to imagine.

To come back to the PTV, Abhinavagupta's emphasis on gnosis, on the intensity of immersion, on the absorption in the Supreme, is not to be doubted. The ultimate teaching of the PTV is clearly the transcending of ritual (to use the title of the last chapter of this book). One may perhaps ask oneself whether Abhinavagupta wasn't, in this respect, overemphasising this aspect of the PT's teaching. This is possible, but all the less certain since already such earlier Tantras as the Jayarathayāmala, to which Abhinavagupta often refers, notably in the Tantrāloka, prescribe the adept to respect, in the social field, the rules of the *varṇāśramadharma*. He had all the more reasons to do so since in his time Tantra had ceased being the practice of small transgressive ascetic groups (were they ever those of larger groups? in spite of its pervasion of the Hindu world, Tantra was always a matter of active minorities), but were the secret private practice of well-established, socially conservative

gṛhasthas[2]. (Tantra was never socially transgressive — quite the contrary). As such it has survived during centuries, marked innumerable aspects of Indian culture, however, in the particular case of the Trika, remaining only as a metaphysical system (mystical, too), its ritual aspect having disappeared. Tantric rites and practices went on surviving and survive, sometimes very actively, but in other traditions, for other cults, among other groups, in other centres (or countries). We go on reading the Tantrāloka, but nobody would dream (or be able, and still less qualified for) performing the rites described in the thirty odd chapters of this text which follow the first five where Abhinavagupta (as we are reminded here) proclaimed the equal usefulness and uselessness of ritual practice.

But, ritual being transcended, what remains, on the metaphysical and the mystical plane, expounded in several passages of the PTV, is precisely that which can say something to us, be of some — essential! — use in this present world. By translating and interpreting this text over 1000 years of history into a completely different context is surely hazardous. It is a difficult work, where subtlety, 'acribie,' empathy are needed — and are found here. Bäumer's "double *adhikāra*," as she calls it: to have worked with Swami Lakshman Joo in "a unique personal union" and to be well trained in European Indology, made her specially apt for this work.

In her introduction, Bettina Bäumer hopes that her "intercultural work in hermeneutic" on the PTV will not only make this text accessible but also have its relevance for our present world: she has, I believe, perfectly succeeded in doing so.

Paris, November 20, 2010 André Padoux

2. Jayaratha, commenting the Tantrāloka 4.24, quotes the formula: *antaḥ kaulo bahiḥ śaivo lokācāre tu vaidikaḥ* which sums up the behaviour of the *gṛhastha* Brahmin follower of the Trika.

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I am also grateful to the present Director of the Institute, Prof. Peter Ronald De Souza, for his understanding and for accepting this text for publication. I should not forget to thank the staff of the IIAS, who were very supportive during my stay. With deep regret I remember Mr. M.A. Jabbar, the efficient Academic Resource Officer, who suddently passed away in 2006.

I am also grateful to the scholars of Kashmir Śaivism and Abhinavagupta from whom I have learnt in Varanasi, to mention specially Pandit H.N. Chakravarty and Prof. K.D. Tripathi.

My thanks and respect go to Prabha Devi, the living and learned representative of the tradition of Kashmir Śaivism and direct disciple of Swami Lakshman Joo, for her inspiration and support.

Without the guidance and inspiration of the last Master of Trika and Pratyabhijñā, Swami Lakshman Joo of Kashmir, I could not have approached

this difficult text. I was extremely fortunate to sit at his feet from 1986 till his *samādhi* in 1991. This book, with all its deficiencies, is laid at his feet as a sign of my total indebtedness. He gave me access to this rich tradition which he wanted to continue and be passed on.

I am extremely grateful to Professor André Padoux for agreeing to write a Foreword. He is the most eminent scholar in the field of Mantraśāstra and I am deeply indebted to his work.

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Bettina Bäumer

Contents

Abbreviations

APS	*Ajaḍapramātṛ Siddhi* (Utpaladeva)
BhG	*Bhagavad-Gītā*
ĪPK	*Īśvarapratyabhijñā Kārikā* (Utpaladeva)
ĪPV	*Īśvarapratyabhijñā Vimarśinī* (Abhinavagupta)
KaṭhU	*Kaṭha Upaniṣad*
KSTS	Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies
MBh	*Mahābhārata*
MVT	*Mālinīvijayottara Tantra*
MVV	*Mālinīvijaya Vārttika* (Abhinavagupta)
Pā	Pāṇini
PT	*Parātrīśikā*
PTV	*Parātrīśikā Vivaraṇa* (Abhinavagupta)
SāKā	*Sāṁkhya Kārikā*
ŚD	*Śivadṛṣṭi*
SpKā	*Spanda Kārikā*
StC	*Stavacintāmaṇi* (Bhaṭṭanārāyaṇa)
SvT	*Svacchanda Tantra*
TĀ	*Tantrāloka* (Abhinavagupta)
TS	*Tantrasāra* (Abhinavagupta)
VBh	*Vijñāna Bhairava*
YSū	*Yogasūtra*

Introduction

etadguhyam mahāguhyam

(Tell me) This secret, this great (non)secret.

THE *Parātrīśikā Tantra* belongs to the highest class of Tantras or revealed scriptures of the non-dualist Śaivism of Kashmir. The text has attracted the attention of the greatest philosopher of the school, Abhinavagupta. Along with the *Mālinīvijayottara Tantra* and the *Vijñāna Bhairava* (on which he did not write a separate commentary) he accepted them as authority in the field of spiritual practice and mystical realisation. The reason is that they approach the ultimate Reality in an attitude of "supreme non-dualism" (*paramādvaita*), which transcends not only the dualism of the Śaiva Siddhānta scriptures, but also their reliance on the performance of ritual for attaining liberation.[1] To give only an example of this attitude from the *Mālinīvijayottara Tantra*:

> In (the practice of) this Tantra there is neither purity nor its absence; no concern for what may be eaten and so forth; neither dualistic observance nor its rejection; neither such (rituals) as *liṅga* worship nor their abandonment; neither (the rule of) owning nothing nor its opposite. . . . Everything (may be) enjoined or forbidden in this scripture. This is strictly ruled in it, O Empress of the Gods, that the meditator, striving with all his strength, should fix his awareness firmly on Reality. He may adopt whatever form of practice enables him to achieve that. — 18.74-79

These texts propound as their final position "an enlightened Śaiva consciousness which enjoys a perfect freedom of practice by embracing and transcending all the

1. In spite of the fact, as examined by A. Sanderson, that the *MVT* as such does not contain an Advaita doctrine: *The Doctrine of the Mālinīvijayottara Tantra*. R. Torella (in: *The Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā of Utpaladeva*, p. XXI) defines *paramādvaita* as "such an elevated viewpoint that it does not fear what is different from itself. . . ."

Śaiva systems. . . ." (Sanderson 2005: 106). These Tantras, in different ways, believe in the sudden enlightenment of what Abhinavagupta calls *anupāya* in his *Tantrāloka*, the "no-means," "the pathless path."[2]

The Text and the Commentary

The *Parātrīśikā*, frequently called *Parātriṁśikā*, is a short Tantra containing 36 verses,[3] which claims to be a part of the *Rudrayāmala Tantra* (v.37 *ityetad rudrayāmalam*). The Yāmala Tantras are an important group of Tantras of the Vidyāpīṭha, most of which still await publication, but the claim of two short and in themselves complete Tantras, the *Parātrīśikā* and the *Vijñāna Bhairava*, to belong to a larger *Rudrayāmala* does not seem to be justified: the style of these two Tantras is very different, and even without being a part — or even the essence[4] — of a larger Tantra, they retain a very high status of spiritual authority in the tradition. This claim may only reflect the desire of the redactors to enhance their authority by inserting them in the class of Yāmala Tantras.[5] Thus the expression *ityetad rudrayāmalam* may only refer to the state of union of Rudra and Rudrā (Śiva-Śakti) as the end-result of the Tantra and its practice.[6] The name *Parātriṁśikā*, indicating a text of 30 verses, is misleading, because it contains 35, 36 or 37 verses. It may have gained popularity only because of its familiar sound. Abhinavagupta makes it clear that the real name is *Parātrīśikā*: "(The Tantra relating to) The Supreme (*parā*) Goddess (*īśikā*) of the Three (*tri*)." Thus the name itself indicates that it is a scripture of the Trika whose central Divinity is *Parā*. It is best to quote Abhinavagupta's own interpretation when he states the *abhidheya* or subject matter of the text:

> Now, we are going to describe the *abhidheya* or subject matter. *Trīśīkā* is a compound word. This is its analysis: "the *īśikā* of the three" (*tisṛṇām īśikā*). "Of the three" means "of *icchā* (will), *jñāna* (knowledge), *kriyā* (activity)." The three are also designated by such other words

2. *TĀ* II.

3. 37 in the edition of Jaideva Singh, depending on the arrangement of the manuscripts.

4. Cf. *Vijñāna Bhairava* v. 162.

5. The published *Rudrayāmala* is a different text and its style is quite different from both these short Tantras: *Rudrayāmalam (Uttaratantram)*, Parts I and II, ed. S. Malaviya, Delhi: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Pratishthan, 1999.

6. *PT* v.37, *VBh* v.162.

as *sṛṣṭi, sthiti, saṁhāra* — creation, maintenance, dissolution — or *udyoga, avabhāsa* and *carvaṇā*. *Īśikā* means *Īśvarī*, the Goddess who governs and controls the three, i.e. *icchā, jñāna* and *kriyā* (*Śakti*s) or *sṛṣṭi, sthiti* and *saṁhāra*, or *udyoga, avabhāsa*, and *carvaṇā*. It should be borne in mind that *īśanā* or governance or control in this context means "being non-different or identical with that which is to be governed or controlled." Therefore, the revered goddess *parā śakti* (i.e. the supreme divine Consciousness) who at once transcends this division of three (viz. *sṛṣṭi, sthiti, saṁhāra*, etc.) and is identical with it is the *abhidheya* or subject matter of the book, and because of its connexion with *parā*, the title (lit. name) of this Śāstra is *Trīśikā*. Another reading of *trīśikā*, given by venerable teachers is *triṁśakā*, and owing to the similarity of words, they give the following etymology:

That which speaks out (*kāyati*) the three *śakti*s or "powers" is *triṁśakā*. The word *triṁśakā* derived from its connexion with thirty (*triṁśat*) verses is not correct. Even thus, it is not the number of verses but only the sense of *triṁśakā*, that should be adopted. — pp. 17-18[7]

Thus some of the different triads of Trika are implied in the title:

parā — *parāparā* — *aparā*: Supreme — supreme-cum-non-supreme — non-supreme

icchā — *jñāna* — *kriyā* : the Energies of Will — Knowledge — Activity

sṛṣṭi — *sthiti* — *saṁhāra* : emanation — sustenance — dissolution

Another important name of the Tantra is *Anuttarasūtra*: the concise statement or aphorism relating to the Absolute,[8] and *Trikasūtra*, the essence or aphorism of the Trika. That the *Parātrīśikā* occupied a very high place among the scriptures of the Trika is testified also by the number of commentaries, and, as we shall see later, by

7. Page numbers without any other reference refer to Jaideva Singh's translation. B.N. Pandit, in his *Kāśmīraśaivadarśanabṛhatkoṣaḥ* (vol. III, pp. 375-76) expresses his surprise that scholars continue using the title *Parātriṁśikā* when Abhinavagupta himself has made it clear that it is not correct: *āścaryametad yadevaṁ vidhe 'bhinavaguptīye vyākhyāne vidyamāne 'pi vidvaṁso granthasyāsya, svakalpitameva tannāma vyavaharanti yannirastamācāryeṇa spaṣṭam*! p. 375.

8. Abhinavagupta refers to earlier teachers/commentators who have given this title: *triṁśikā cānuttarasūtra iti guravaḥ*, p. 102 J.S. (Jaideva Singh has taken *anuttara-* here as an adjective: "unsurpassable Sūtra", p. 267, but it is more than that).

its influence beyond Kashmir, its place of origin. Its age is uncertain, but in any case it already enjoyed a high reputation in the eighth-ninth centuries. It may not be wrong to place the text in the seventh century or earlier.[9]

There have been commentaries pre-dating Abhinavagupta which unfortunately have not survived. We find the names of authors Bhavabhūti and Kalyāṇa.[10] Abhinavagupta criticises earlier commentators and rejects their interpretation, but he relies on the *Vivṛti* by Somānanda, the author of the *Śivadṛṣṭi* and founder of the Pratyabhijñā philosophy. This commentary in its entirety has also not survived. We can only reconstruct some of his interpretations on the basis of the fragments quoted by Abhinavagupta, who always refers to his predecessor (*guru* of Utpaladeva, his own *paramaguru*) with the greatest respect. Only here and there does he differ from his interpretation.

> I have written this work after (fully) reflecting on the doctrine of Somānanda which has spontaneously entered my heart which shares the pure state of truth taught by my *guru*.
>
> — Summary verse 18, p. 272

A late and brief commentary by Rājānaka Lakṣmīrāma alias Lasakāka (eighteenth-nineteenth centuries) shows that by his time a part of the oral transmission has been lost. His commentary

> is ignorant of . . . the true character of the text as instruction in the worship of, and meditation on, the Mantra of the Trika's Parā, wrongly taking the Mantra to be the Aghora . . . Mantra of *Svacchandabhairava*, thus assimilating the text to the *Svacchanda*-based cult of that deity. . . .[11]

The *Parātrīśikā Vivaraṇa* is one of the most mature and difficult works by Abhinavagupta on the Trika, in the following chronological order:[12]

9. Cf. A. Sanderson, *Textual Traditions . . .*, p. 212.

10. Cf. *Tantrāloka* XIII.149.

11. A. Sanderson, *The Śaiva Exegesis of Kashmir*, p. 379.

12. Cf. A. Sanderson in *Sāmarasya*, p. 124, note 88, where he gives the arguments for this sequence. "That the *Parātrīśikāvivaraṇa* was written before the *Tantrāloka* is shown by *TĀ* 9.313. There Abhinavagupta says that he has explained at length his assertion that each reality level contains all those above it in his treatise on the Anuttara (*anuttaraprakriyāyāṁ*), →

Mālinīvijayavārttika	Commentary on the *Mālinīvijayottara Tantra,*
Parātrīśikā Vivaraṇa,	
Tantrāloka	"Light on the Tantras" (or: "Illumination of the Tantras"), the most exhaustive and original work, and
Tantrasāra	a short version of the *Tantrāloka*

Abhinavagupta left the task of exegesis of other important Tantras of the tradition, namely the *Svacchanda Tantra* and the *Netra Tantra,* to his most gifted disciple and prolific writer, Kṣemarāja, whose commentaries on these Tantras are of invaluable merit. Unfortunately his commentary on the *Vijñāna Bhairava* remained incomplete.

The Tantra

As with all Śaivāgamas, the Tantra is revealed in the form of a dialogue between the Devī and Bhairava. This dialogue form has been given a non-dualistic interpretation in the context of the Advaita Bhairavāgamas — it starts from different kinds of relationship (*sambandha*). Since the commentary will go into great detail of every aspect of this dialogue, it is not necessary to elucidate it in this

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that is to say, in his treatise on the *Parātrīśikā*. For Anuttara in this sense see, e.g. *PTV*, p. 282 (*KED*, p. 276), 1. 26; *MVV*, 1.917 (*ānuttara yāgaḥ*); *MVV*, 1.1120b (*ānuttaro nayaḥ*). The work to which he refers is his *Parātrīśikāvivaraṇa* and the passage in question is *PTV*, p. 231, l. 28 p. 234, l. 13 (*KED*, pp. 137-43). The priority of the *Parātrīśikāvivaraṇa* is also indicated by the fact that Abhinavagupta reports in that work that he writes for the benefit of his disciple Karṇa (p. 284, vv. 7-10 [*KED*, pp. 279-80]), who, with Mandra, also requested the *Mālinīvijayavārttika* (1.11), whereas in the *Tantrāloka* he tells us (*TĀ*, 37.65) that Karṇa is dead. The *Mālinīvijayavārttika* too was written before the *Tantrāloka* since the latter refers to the former's account of the Śiva canon at 37.30 (*mayaitat srotasāṁ rūpam anuttarapadād dhruvāt | ārabhya vistareṇoktaṁ mālinīślokavārttike*). That the *Mālinīvijayavārttika* was written before the *Parātrīśikāvivaraṇa* is very strongly indicated by Abhinavagupta's statement in the latter (p. 198 [*KED*, p. 36], 1. 10) that he has already expounded at length in another work the subject of the state of absolute potential's "non-circumscription by past and future" (*kālobhayāparicchedaḥ*). For this topic is treated at length in the *Mālinīvijayavārttika*, 1.52-158 and nowhere else in his surviving works.

That the Pratyabhijñā works were written after the exegesis of the *Mālinīvijayottara* is established by a citation from the *Tantrasāra* in *ĪPVV*, vol. 2, p. 203, 11.14.18 and by a reference to works "such as the *Tantrāloka* and *Tantrasāra* in *ĪPV*, vol. 2, p. 214, 1.9."

introduction. However, although the Tantra opens with a question from the Goddess in a verse containing the essence of the Tantra, and Bhairava reveals it in the form of answer, the dialogue is not brought to a conclusion at the end, as is the case in the *Vijñāna Bhairava*. There the Devī reappears at the end and expresses her full satisfaction with the answer given by Bhairava, and hence she merges with Him.[13] The *Parātrīśikā* ends without such a dramatic conclusion.

The intense question of the Devī covers two and a half verses. From verse 3cd begins the answer by Bhairava with an address to the Goddess. From verse 5 to 9ab Bhairava expounds the *tattva*s in the order of creation (*sṛṣṭi*) and relates them to the elements of speech or the phonemes of the alphabet, the basis of all *mantra*s. In verses 9cd-11 he reveals the central *mantra* of *Parā*, "the seed of the heart, *hṛdayabīja*," "the heart of the God of gods," in encoded form, followed by the powers of the *mantra* and the fruit attained by its practice (vv. 12-20), and the substitution of ritual by gnosis (21-24). The summing up starts from v. 25, followed by the ritual practice of the *mantra* (*sṛṣṭibīja* or *hṛdayabīja* = SAUḤ) in verses 26-35. The result or *phalaśruti* of this practice is stated to be the state of omniscience in verses 36-37.

There are other possible arrangements in structuring the text. In the course of the analysis we shall come to further details.

Verses	1-4	treat of *anuttara*: the Absolute
	5-9	treat of *uttara*: the manifestation and reflection in the elements of language and the levels of Reality (*tattvas*)
	10-18	the *mantra SAUḤ*: *hṛdayabīja*
	19-20ab	knowledge higher than ritual
	21-24	the three Śaktis
	25-26	knowledge higher than ritual
	27-35	ritual practice of the *mantra* (*vidhi*)
	36-37	*phalaśruti*: fruit of the practice

A broad division of the text in two sections (even called *grantha*, texts) is given by Abhinavagupta as:

13. *VBh* v. 162-64.

1. *bimba*: verses 1-4
2. *pratibimba*: verses 5-37

The *bimba* section contains the description of the nature of the Absolute (*anuttara-svarūpa*), the principal theme of the text; the *pratibimba* section describes the expansion in manifestation, being a reflection of the Absolute in language and in creation (*sṛṣṭi*), including the ritual associated. Again, in short, the first section relates to *anuttara*, the second to *uttara*, or to *kaulika vidhi*, the order of universal expansion of the Absolute.[14]

Before moving on to the second section (starting from v. 5 of the Tantra), Abhinavagupta gives a kind of summary of the question and relates it to Trika: The question of the Devī in one and a half verses starting with *anuttaram* relates to Śiva. The second part of her question (v. 2) starting with *hṛdayasthā tu yā śaktiḥ* relates to Śakti. Then the question arises about the third element of Trika, Nara (*atra yadi eṣā trikārthābhiprāyeṇa vyākhyā tat nara viṣayapraśnaprasaṅgaḥ*, p. 32, l. 21). This seems to be an introduction to the second part: *pratibimba* or *uttara*, which contains every aspect of Nara. But the alternative is that the two questions concern Yāmala, i.e. "Śiva and Śakti whose connection is known as *yāmala* so that a separate question about each could be justified" (p. 82).

Abhinavagupta

Abhinavagupta is one of the most extraordinary figures, not only in the domain of Indian philosophy, but also in a universal context, comprising aesthetics, philosophy, Tantra and mysticism all in one. Therefore his importance cannot only be assessed in the context of Sanskrit literature. It is high time that his genius got duly recognised beyond the area of his origin and language. For this we need translations of his works and studies which make him accessible outside the Kashmiri, Sanskrit and Indian contexts.

This is not the place to give an exposition of his life and work,[15] but a few introductory remarks may be necessary, especially in view of the fact that he is so little known, even in India. It is mainly his works on aesthetics and poetics which

14. Cf. text p. 33, tr. pp. 83-84.

15. Cf. R.C. Pandey, *Abhinavagupta*.

have been received and acknowledged: his *Abhinavabhāratī* or commentary on the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, and his *Dhvanyāloka Locana*, the commentary on Ānandavardhana's *Dhvanyāloka*. His aesthetic theory, based on the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, has become an indispensable method to apply, not only in drama and poetry, but in all fields of the arts, especially music.[16]

There are few authors, even in the Indian tradition, who, like Abhinavagupta, combine such an enormous range of subjects and fields with the depth of mystical experience and philosophical insight. All these areas of knowledge are not diverse, but are interconnected within a consistent cosmology and soteriology, based on the Śaivāgamas. But whatever subject Abhinavagupta touches, it has the fragrance of his own personal experience and understanding. He is thus a perfect example how allegiance to the tradition, be it the Āgamic revelation or the lineage of teachers (*sampradāya*), does not stifle original thought, but rather nourishes it.

The final part of the text itself, i.e. the concluding verses of the *Vivaraṇa*, will provide us the personal touch of the author, his biography, his indebtedness to his parents and teachers, and love for his disciples and pupils.

To get a taste of his own evaluation of the different fields of knowledge and works we may quote one of the moving verses in which he sums up his career:

> I have cleansed myself first by bathing fully in grammar, I have collected the flowers of discerning wisdom that grow in that wish-granting creeper of insightful imagination which grows out of the roots of good reasoning, and worshipped the Lord of my heart with them; I have enjoyed the benefits of such beautiful great literature and poetry as can be compared with liquor made out of the essence of Ambrosia; and now, in the company of my beloved lady: discourse on divine non-duality, I am going to repose.[17]

And he concludes his *maṅgala* verses by hinting at the different Tāntric traditions which he masters:

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16. Cf. his chapters on musicology in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, ed. and tr. by Prem Lata Sharma (in way of publication). Cf. my article: "Light and Reflection. The Metaphysical Background of Aesthetics in Kashmir Śaivism", in: *Aesthetic Theories and Forms in Indian Tradition*, ed. Kapila Vatsyayan and D.P. Chattopadhyaya, New Delhi, 2008 (Centre for Studies in Civilization), pp. 127-47.

17. Sanskrit Benedictory verse 5 to the *IPVV*, tr. by Arindam Chakrabarti, in: *Sāmarasya*, p. 27.

I praise the immortal, infinite Absolute (*anuttara*), Aghora, the one who governs the wheel of the twelve Energies (= 12 Kālīs), who is the first initiator for removing mental dullness.

— *IPVV maṅgala* v. 6

His south-Indian ascetic disciple Madhurāja who composed an eulogy on his guru, *Gurunāthaparāmarśa*,[18] mentions the following Tāntric schools of which he was a master:

siddhānta-vāma-bhairava-yāmala-kaula-trika-ekavīrāṇām ।
abhinavaguptaḥ śrimānācāryapade sthito jayati ॥

— v. 20

It is interesting to note that he mentions the Ekavīra after Kaula and Trika, namely the tradition of Trika to which our present text belongs. In the verse immediately following he praises Abhinavagupta, comparing him with other authors:

abhinavaguptanāthalikhitaṁ likhitaṁ hṛdaye ।
taditaraśāstrakāralikhitaṁ likhitaṁ salile ॥

— v. 21ab

Whatever Abhinavagupta has written, it is written on the heart,
What other authors of texts have written is (as if) written on water.

His relation to the different Tāntric traditions which he received and practised will be dealt with later, also in the context of his paying respect to his *gurus*. Whatever knowledge he has received from a number of teachers of different traditions, he never fails to acknowledge that he has attained his enlightenment from Śambhunātha, his *guru* in Kula/Kaula and Trika traditions.

The dating of Abhinavagupta's works has already been established, but it may be mentioned here as well, as summarised by A. Sanderson:

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18. Cf. V. Raghavan, *Abhinavagupta and His Works*, critical edn., of the *Gurunātha Parāmarśa*, pp. 3-16.

> To determine the chronology of the Kashmirian Śaiva literature in its most creative phase we have only three precise dates, found in concluding verses at the end of three of Abhinavagupta's works. These report that his *Kramastotra* was completed in [40]66 (=CE 991), his *Bhairavastotra* in [40]68 (=CE 993), and his *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvivṛttivimarśinī* in [40]90 (=CE 1015).[19]

It may be possible, therefore, to date his *Vivaraṇa* around the turn of the millennium.

Vivaraṇa

At the beginning of his *Īśvarapratyabhijñā Vivṛttivimarśinī* Abhinavagupta elaborates on the different levels of root-text and commentaries. This passage throws light on the relationship between *Sūtra* and *Vivaraṇa* in the *Parātrīśikā Vivaraṇa*, since he calls the Tantra a *Sūtra*, and his commentary *Vivaraṇa*. In the context of the *Īśvarapratyabhijñā* he calls Utpaladeva's Kārikās *Sūtra*, not formally, but as being the condensed base text. The Sūtras are followed by the author's own *Vṛtti* and then *Vivṛtti* (the latter lost in its entirety), and by Abhinavagupta's *Vimarśinī*. In summary:

In the *Sūtra* the author's heart opens up (*sūtre sphuraddhṛdaya . . .* , p. 16), in the *Vṛtti* the essence of what has blossomed forth/opened up is exposed (*arthān sphuritasāra*), and in the *vivṛtti* it is manifested in order to reach the understanding of all people (*vivṛttau tu vyaktā sarvajanagocaratāṁ gataḥ*). Then he relates these stages to the levels of manifestation of the Word (*vāc*):

> At the level of the reality of the Supreme Word the universe exists without any distinction/separation. The nature of *paśyantī* (the visionary) hints at differentiation (*āsūtritabhedam* is consciously used to contain the essence or *Sūtra*); at the level of *madhyamā* (the intermediary) differentiation becomes unfolded (*unmīlita*, opens, is disclosed), and at the level of *vaikharī* (the expressed word) differentiation becomes clearly manifest in the form of separate acts of reflection (*bhinnaparāmṛśyamānarūpatayā*). (p. 16)

This is possible because they are coming down from *parāvāk*. In the context of the Kārikās, R. Torella says: "On the supreme plane the essence of the doctrine still lies

19. Sanderson, *Śaiva Exegesis*, p. 411.

in the consciousness of its author, Utpaladeva, undivided from Śiva, and is given the name of "heart," precisely because of its quintessential nature."[20] In the case of the Tantra, there is, of course, no distinction between *parāvāk* and Śiva.

Thus, Torella continues, at the level of *Sūtra* "the author reveals his undivided supreme heart, taking place in the nature of intuitive insight (*pratibhā*). . . . In this way the awakening of the self, resting in the heart of the *guru*, becomes gradually clear in the form of Sūtras."[21] Again he defines the different steps of unfolding of a text, leading up to *Vivaraṇa*: "*Sūtra* is that which "threads" meaning"; *Vṛtti* is the turning around of the very subject matter of the *Sūtra*; "*Vivṛtti* is the *Vivaraṇa* (= uncovering) of the hidden meaning of a text which is as if covered by the heap of dust consisting in the doubt of other opinions, which is removed by it" (p. 17). The definition of *Vivaraṇa* is hence clear — its function consists in removing the coverings (*āvaraṇatvam*) which enclose the real meaning of the text or the *Sūtra*. At the same time a *Vivaraṇa* shares the function of *Vivṛtti* in the sense of disclosing the meaning for the understanding of all readers/listeners.

What is the purpose of this excursus on the definitions of different levels of a text and its interpretations?

Abhinavagupta calls the Tantra which he comments upon a *Sūtra*, more so, *Anuttarasūtra*, the essence of the Absolute, as we shall notice at the end of the commentary, although it does not have a human author as do the *Kārikās* of Utpaladeva. He consciously calls his commentary *Vivaraṇa*, keeping the above definition in mind. In a modest sense it is that which removes the obstacles and coverings, in a broader sense it expands the insight of the Tantra understood as a *Sūtra*. Similarly as in the case of the *Īśvarapratyabhijñā*, the *Vivaraṇa* (resp. *Vimarśinī*) is a further step of interpretation after the *Vivṛtti* by Somānanda on the *Parātrīśikā*. In both cases, the entire *Vivṛtti* is not available any more, and it can be reconstrued only on the basis of the fragments quoted.

Among the extant works of Abhinavagupta the *Vivaraṇa* stands unique in that it is a direct commentary on the Tantra. In the case of the *Mālinīvijayottara*, his

20. R. Torella, "A Fragment of Utpaladeva's Īsvarapratyabhijñā-vivṛtti", in: *East and West* 38 (1988), p. 138.

21. . . . *evam ātmasambodho guruhṛdaya viśrāntaḥ sūtrādiṣu krameṇa sphuṭībhūtaḥ* . . ., pp. 16-17.

proclaimed central scripture of the Trika, we have the *Vārttika* which expands on various themes of the Tantra, without even quoting it for the most part,[22] and the *Tantrāloka*, which is a Śāstra or a *paddhati* — based mainly, but not exclusively, on the *Mālinīvijayottara*, not in the form of a commentary. Therefore, his commentarial genius, his combination of faithfulness to the urtext and originality of interpretation, can be seen only in the *Vivaraṇa* in relation to the *Parātrīśikā*.

What has doubtlessly contributed to Abhinavagupta's predilection for this Tantra is the very first word in the question of the Devī: *Anuttara*. And in fact, this is also the only work[23] which is wholly focused on the concept of *Anuttara*. This uniqueness of the *Vivaraṇa* will be observed throughout the text.

Anuttaraprakriyā

Abhinavagupta refers to his own work in his *Tantrāloka* as *Anuttaraprakriyā*:[24] "The treatise/the method relating to the Unsurpassable/Absolute" (IX.313). Not only do we know from this auto-quotation the sequence of his works, namely that the *Tantrāloka* has been composed after the *Vivaraṇa*, but the title given by him is significant in two ways:

1. That the entire purport of the *Parātrīśikā* is related to *Anuttara*; and
2. *Prakriyā* is more than a method or procedure, it has a very specific meaning.

The title of the present work is one possible translation of *Anuttaraprakriyā*, taking *prakriyā* in the sense of *hermeneutics*, which is true, as we shall see in the first part: "Hermeneutics of the Absolute." But *prakriyā* is obviously more than a linguistic or philosophical elaboration of the idea or "concept" of *anuttara*, it is very much a practical approach, be it by way of ritual or *yoga*.

The *Svacchanda Tantra* contains the oft-quoted phrase: *na prakriyāparaṁ jñānam*

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22. Cf. Hanneder, *Abhinavagupta's Philosophy of Revelation*.

23. Apart from his *Stotra Anuttarāṣṭikā* (given in Appendix). A. Sanderson also doubts Abhinavagupta's authorship, cf. *The Śaiva Exegesis of Kashmir*, p. 381. It is quoted by Jayaratha on the *Tantrāloka*.

24. Interestingly, Jayaratha explains this title by: *śrī-parātrīśikāvivaraṇādāvityarthaḥ*, vol. IV, p. 1883, implying that there are other texts by Abhinavagupta which could receive the same title.

(XI.199), "There is no knowledge higher than *prakriyā* (knowledge)." We have to look at the context to understand the implications. The Tantra speaks of the levels of reality or categories, the *tattva*s and the various worlds, within which there are manifold scriptures:

evaṁ sṛṣṭāni tattvāni jñānāni ca varānane |
tattvair etairjagatsarvaṁ visṛṣṭaṁ sacarācaram ||

bhuvanāni vicitrāṇi śataśo 'tha sahasraśaḥ |
tattvābhyantarasaṁsthāni śāstrāṇi vividhāni ca ||

vijñānaṁ kuhalaṁ śilpaṁ siddhisandohalakṣaṇam |
— *SvT* XI.195-197

The various Śāstras contain different branches of knowledge, including ritual and philosophical, magic and the arts. And all this is to be understood in the context of the categories of existence or levels of reality, the 36 *tattva*s. But the means or method of attaining this knowledge through the *tattva*s is initiation: *prakriyā śivadīkṣā ca tattvairetairhi labhyate* (XI.198). And there is no liberation other than by initiation:

nāsti dīkṣāsamo mokṣaḥ
na vidyā mātṛkā parā |
na prakriyāparaṁ jñānaṁ
nāsti yogastvalakṣyakaḥ ||
— *SvT* XI.199

Kṣemarāja makes it clear that *prakriyā* knowledge alone, the pre-condition of which is *śivadīkṣā,* leads to liberation. Compared to this all other categories of knowledge are inferior. This is also with reference to other schools and systems enumerated before.[25] Kṣemarāja comments on *yoga*: "That is no *yoga* when the supreme goal is not known, which is the abode of repose. Even if it is known, it is considered limited *yoga* in this system (*iha*), it is no *yoga* in the elucidation of the Unsurpassable, for here only that is called supreme *yoga* which can unite (with the Absolute)." (. . . *iha anuttaracarcāyāmayoga eveti yojanikoktaḥ parayogaḥ eveti iha yogaḥ*). Here

25. Cf. XI.173-82, mentioning, e.g. logic, *hetuśāstra, vādajalpa, laukika, pāñcarātram, vaidikam, bauddham, arahatam* (= Jaina), *sāṁkhya, yoga*, etc.

anuttara-carcā refers to the Advaita system. And the Tantra sums up: *tatsarvaṁ kathitaṁ devi śivajñānamahodadhau*, "all this has been explained in the great ocean of Śiva knowledge." Kṣemarāja explains this simile thus: "Because the *śivajñāna* is deep and it is the resting place of all the rivers of knowledge, and because it is the cause of obtaining all spiritual treasures,[26] therefore, it is (like) a great ocean." (on *SvT* XI.200 ab)

This understanding of *prakriyā* has to be kept in mind when Abhinavagupta calls his *Vivaraṇa* commentary *Anuttaraprakriyā*, implying also the integration-and-transcendence of all the *tattvas*.

In the context of the "Way of Space," *deśādhvan*, Abhinavagupta quotes this phrase of the *Svacchanda* in his *Tantrāloka*:

> That "path" (*adhvan*) should be examined by which the *yogī*, by a unifying contemplation on the order of the *prakriyā* alone, attains shortly the state of Bhairava. — *TĀ* VIII.5[27]

And Jayaratha explains *prakriyākrama* as follows:

> The order of *prakriyā* means the station following the sequence starting from Kālāgni up to Anāśrita (Śiva), as they arise sequentially. "He should contemplate" means, by the reflection "I am all" the *yogī* attains the state of repose in his own Self (*svātmaviśrāntimayatām*), and quickly realises the identity with Supreme Consciousness.
> — *Tantrāloka*, vol. IV, p. 1354

In verse 11 Abhinavagupta quotes the *Svacchanda*:

> Having considered that Śivahood is attained in this way, (the Lord has said) in the *Svacchanda Tantra*: "there is no knowledge higher than *prakriyā*." — *TĀ* VIII.11

Quoting the *Triśiraḥśāstra* (=*Triśirobhairava Tantra*) he explicitly states that *prakriyā*

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26. *samastasampatsamavāptihetutvāt*: this refers to Utpaladeva, *IPK* I.1.

27. *tatrādhvaivaṁ nirūpyo 'yaṁ*
yatastatprakriyākhyam |
anusaṁdadhadeva drāg
yogī bhairavatām vrajet || *TĀ* VIII. 5.

implies the integration of the 36 *tattvas* in consciousness.[28] In conclusion he says:

> (The *yogī*) who directs all things, elements, beings (states), worlds, etc. in unity with (his own) consciousness in an act of undivided awareness, he is (himself) Bhairava, the Supreme Lord (Parameśvara).[29]

The reference to the *Svacchanda Tantra* and to Abhinavagupta's use of it in the context of *adhvaprakriyā* and *deśādhvan* may suffice to show the technical implications of *prakriyā* when applied to the *Vivaraṇa*, as will be clear in the course of interpretation of the text.

Abhinavagupta's Method

Whatever text or subject matter he deals with, Abhinavagupta does it with intense awareness of the methodology, and using all the tools at his disposal: from grammar to etymology to logic, to all the principles of scriptural hermeneutics, literary criticism, poetics, etc. He used not only traditional methods of interpretation, but he was also a keen observer of the phenomenological and psychological states and applies appropriate methods to bridge the gap between theology and everyday experience. In the present *Vivaraṇa* we find such an employment of a phenomenological method, for example, in the fields of language and of sexuality. He perceptively narrates the development of language in a child, for instance, and relates it to the levels of the Word (*vāc*). We shall find many such examples of subtle psychological observations.

Abhinavagupta's hermeneutical genius has been well expressed by Arindam Chakrabarti, in relation to the *Īśvarapratyabhijñā Vivṛttivimarśinī*:

> Anyone who has wrestled with the complex argumentation, the mixing of esoteric meditation techniques with conceptual logical subtlety, the relentless play of hermeneutic imagination, the amazing

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28. *triśiraḥśāsane bodho*
mūlamadhyāgrakalpitaḥ |
ṣaṭtriṁśattattvasaṁrambhaḥ
smṛtirbheda vikalpanā || *TĀ* of VIII.12-15 ab.

29. *saṁvidekātmatānīta-bhūtabhāvapurādikaḥ* |
avyavacchinnasaṁvittir-bhairavaḥ parameśvaraḥ || *TĀ* VIII.15 cd-16ab.

> width of erudition and incisiveness of psychological observations would know that it is anything but the work of a tired retiring intellect.[30]

There are two basic principles which Abhinavagupta applies to the exegesis of an Āgama: One is the need to discover internal coherence and consistency, called *ekavākyatā*. This implies, on the one hand, establishing the connections between the different parts of the Tantra and to see their interrelatedness. The second principle of exegesis is to discover and describe the inexhaustible store of meaning contained in a sacred text. Therefore he calls his root-text a *Sūtra*, as we have seen, and calls a *Sūtra* "that which gives scope to manifold senses" (p. 267 tr.). That these several meanings cannot be arbitrary but have to be in consonance with the first principle is clear. And these multiple meanings also follow a certain methodological pattern, based on Sanskrit grammar, semantics, and principles of logic and philosophy. The *Parātrīśikā Vivaraṇa* is one of the most important works by Abhinavagupta on philosophy of language, and hence he justifies every interpretation of a word, a root, a syllable, in the light of his insight into the many layers of meaning, and the four dimensions of the Word (*vāc*).

The highest concentration of language is the *mantra*, especially the *bījamantra*, and in the *Parātrīśikā*, the one seed-syllable called *hṛdayabīja*, "the seed of the heart": SAUḤ. But we shall come to this in the course of the interpretation. Within the frame of the exegesis of the Tantra, Abhinavagupta follows the rules of composing a Śāstra. The four elements of a Śāstra or *anubandhacatuṣṭaya* are: (1) *prayojana*: the purpose or aim for which it is composed; (2) the *adhikārī*: who is qualified and able to study the Śāstra; (3) *abhidheya*: the subject matter, related to the title; and (4) *sambandha*: the connection or internal relationship.[31] Abhinavagupta provides a survey of these four elements, giving them an original interpretation, as may be expected from him.[32] Just as he states these elements of a Śāstra at the beginning, so does he come to the conclusion at the end. Jaideva Singh summarised the logical structure as follows:

> The whole book may be regarded as a complete five-membered syllogism according to Nyāya-Śāstra. The first verse, viz. "*anuttaraṁ*

30. In: *Sāmarasya*, op. cit., p. 28.

31. Cf. J.S. tr. pp. 19-20 (Notes).

32. Cf. tr. pp. 16-19, Skt. p. 6-7.

> *kathaṁ deva . . . vrajet"* is the *pratijñā* or introduction of the topic. The intervening verses constitute the *hetu* (logical reason), *udāharaṇa* (example) and *upanaya* (application). The 35th and 36th verses constitute the *nigamana* (conclusion).[33]

The *Vivaraṇa* is a prose text, but as it is the tradition with any Śāstra or commentary, it is framed by *maṅgalaślokas* or benedictory verses, and concluded by summary and autobiographical verses. Both reveal a very personal touch of the author and his relationship with his teachers, his ancestors, parents, relatives and disciples. Especially the concluding verses throw light on the spiritual situation of his time also — in a way not very different from our twenty-first century with its confusing claims of *gurus* exploiting disciples![34] And apart from these introductory and concluding verses, in the middle of the work, at important moments of transition, Abhinavagupta inserts summary verses.[35] However, some of the summary verses are in Prākṛt, which have not been translated.[36]

The *Parātrīśikā Vivaraṇa* is perhaps the best example for Abhinavagupta's genius in explaining every word of the Tantra in its multiple meanings and verbal roots, the ultimate example being the sixteen meanings of the word *anuttara*.

Addressees of the Vivaraṇa: Prayojana and Adhikāra

As a part of the *prayojana* orn purpose for which a work is composed, the question is asked, whom it is composed for. In most orthodox Sanskrit texts this refers to the *adhikārin*, the persons who are entitled, qualified or authorised to study the text. Here, too, Abhinavagupta goes his own original ways. There are three levels on which he responds to this question:

33. Jaideva Singh, note, p. 270.

34. Cf. concluding verses 14-16.

35. E.g., pp. 22, 32 (in Prākṛt), 72-74, 99-100 mostly introduced by: *ayaṁ tātparyārthaḥ* or *saṁkṣepārthaḥ*.

36. R. Gnoli notes in his introduction to the *PTV* (pp. XXXIII-XXXIV) that this kind of Kashmiri Apabhraṁśa is no longer understood by any Kashmiri paṇḍit and that the passages in question are very corrupt and can therefore not be emended. Similar summary verses in Prākṛt in the *Tantrasāra* are accompanied by a Sanskrit *chāyā* which is not the case in the *Vivaraṇa*. He also states that this language is quite different from the Prākṛt or Old Kashmiri of the *Mahānaya Prakāśa* (studied by Grierson). Just as the other scholars dealing with this difficult text, I may also be excused for ignoring the Prākṛt passages.

One is a very personal and biographical one. In other works too he admits that they have been written on the request and insistence of his disciples, who are every time named and described. In the concluding verses of the *Parātrīśikā Vivaraṇa* Abhinavagupta mentions with great affection three disciples for whom he has very specially composed this commentary:

> . . . Karṇa who is a brāhmaṇa, very well understands the mystery of the manifestation and maintenance of the world, who delights in the meditation and reflection on and worship of Śiva, who even in boyhood and youth, abandoning attachment to objects of sense, has resorted to unwavering reflection which eradicates transmigratory existence.
>
> My own brother, Manoratha Gupta by name, having a longing for the Supreme Self, is engrossed in the Śaiva Śāstras, who, in order to destroy transmigratory existence, is eager to examine the entire range of Śāstras and Tantras in order to attain the supreme status of Śiva.
>
> There is also another person, named Rāmadeva, who is devoted to Śaiva Śāstras, who is well-versed in grammar (*pada*), Mīmāṁsā (*vākya*) and Nyāya (*pramāṇa*), and who brings about veritable adornment to his birth in the highest caste (i.e. brāhmaṇa).
>
> May that which I have written with heart full for the good and delight of all these serve as a guide for all for the attainment of (the nature of) Śiva. — concluding verses 6-9, p. 271

Even more, he mentions Karṇa's parents, specially his mother Vatsalikā, "whose mind is filled with an inner disposition towards spiritual matters and expands with delight by the worship of Śiva" (concluding verse 5, tr. pp. 270 f.).

This personal touch is very characteristic of the author. Further, Abhinavagupta mentions two levels of spiritual qualification in the last of the *maṅgalaślokas* (v. 5):

> *nijaśiṣyavibodhāya prabuddhasmaraṇāya ca* |
> *mayābhinavaguptena śramo 'yaṁ kriyate manāk* ||
>
> For enlightening my own disciples, and for reminding the already enlightened ones (of their enlightenment), I, Abhinavagupta, am making some effort (in writing this commentary).

These two functions are important, for even those who have already reached a

stage of enlightenment need to be established in their state by an ever deeper knowledge and understanding. Even for them such a text is not superfluous.

In the course of the *Vivaraṇa* he will frequently come back to the spiritual requirements for understanding this work and putting it into practice. But, contrary to the usual exclusive *adhikāra* mentioned in most Śāstras, he totally rejects any social conditions for reading the Śāstra and practising its injunctions. This, he says, is supported by the Tantras/Āgamas:

> In Trika Śāstras, this very activity almost without any curb is worship. All things are available for the fulfilment of this worship. The course of knowledge has been described in detail. Regarding the castes — brāhmaṇas, etc. — there is no fixed principle, for the caste distinction is artificial. The specification that brāhmaṇas alone are entitled for instruction can convince only the silly herd. This has been conclusively clarified in detail by the Lord in "Mukuṭasaṁhitā." In Trika, it is established without any effort at proving. — p. 223

In one of his efforts at stopping himself from going into greater detail he mentions those recipients who are really qualified and able to enjoy the commentary:

> So enough of elaboration of a topic which can appeal to the hearts of only a few people who have received the teaching from a *guru*, who are of refined taste, who are well-read (lit., who have heard from the learned people a great deal), and who have been purified by the descent of the supreme grace. — p. 74

The conditions mentioned are important, they imply the living tradition. The text has only meaning in the context of receiving it from a *guru*, which is again related to the purification by *paraśaktipāta*, grace of the supreme order. Being learned or well-read (*bahuśruta*) has to be balanced by internal purification which cannot be the result of one's effort, but can be brought about only by *śaktipāta*. (*Skt.*, p. 28)

In a beautiful poetic way he summarises the spiritual purpose of composing the commentary:

> *iti śivarasaṁ pātuṁ yeṣāṁ pipāsati mānasaṁ*
> *satatamaśivadhvaṁse saktaṁ śivena niveśitam* ।
> *hṛdayagaganagranthiṁ teṣāṁ vidārayituṁ haṭhād*
> *abhinava imāṁ praśnavyākhyāṁ vyadhāttrikatattvagām* ॥ — *Skt.* p. 21

> Abhinava has composed this commentary on the question (of the Devī) which reveals the essence of Trika, for cutting asunder forcefully the knot (obstructing) the ether of the heart of those whose mind thirsts to drink the nectar of Śiva, (whose mind) has been penetrated by Śiva, and which is ever engaged in destroying the evil (*aśiva*). — tr. on page 63 (modified)

The purpose (*prayojana*) as well as the recipients (*adhikārin*) of the commentary could not be stated more forcefully. Besides, by calling his *Vivaraṇa* a *praśna-vyākhyā*, Abhinavagupta states implicitly that the question of the Devī contains the entire essence of the text (*trikatattva*).

The Context: The Place of the Text in the Tradition

This introduction is not the place to give a survey of the various Tāntric schools of Śaivism in Kashmir, for which I refer to the work by Alexis Sanderson.[37] And yet we have to situate the text of the Tantra and Abhinavagupta's interpretation in the context where it originated, and continued to be of significance till the present day, whether or not there have been interruptions in the tradition.[38] At the outset it has to be made clear that whatever distinctions are made between the different streams of the tradition, coming down from the revelation by the five faces/mouths of Śiva,[39] they are not to be treated as mutually exclusive, there are not only common elements, but also cross-currents and mutual inclusions. Hence the term "sects" with regard to these schools or *sampradāyas* has to be avoided.[40] Kashmir has been the place of origin of various Tantras/Āgamas, not only of Śaivism, but also Pāñcarātra (Vaiṣṇava) and Śākta. The general broad division within the Śaiva

37. Especially his articles : Śaivism and the Tāntric Traditions; Maṇḍala and Āgamic Identity in the Trika of Kashmir; Meaning in Tāntric Ritual; The Śaiva Exegesis of Kashmir (see Bibliography).

38. For this question see A. Sanderson, Swami Lakshman Joo and His Place in the Kashmirian Śaiva Tradition, in: *Saṃvidullāsaḥ*.

39. See J. Hanneder, Abhinavagupta's Philosophy of Revelation; M. Dyczkowski, The Canon of the Śaivāgamas.

40. Cf. A. Eschmann on the question and criticism of the term "sect" in the context of Indian religious traditions, in: "Religion, Reaction and Change: The Role of Sects in Hinduism", in *Religion and Development in Asian Societies*, Colombo, 1974, pp. 143-57.

revelation is that between the Siddhānta, the orthodox and "Veda-congruent" tradition of Śaivism, and the Mantramārga of the "Left" with its various texts and traditions, comprising the Kula/Kaula, Trika, Krama, including the Yoginī cult and the Kālīkula which are more Śākta in nature. Among the more popular Tāntric traditions in Kashmir, to this day, are the cults of Svacchanda Bhairava or Aghora, based on the *Svacchanda Tantra*, and of Amṛteśvara Bhairava or Netranātha, based on the *Netra Tantra* or *Mṛtyujit* (Overcoming Death). These two cults put more emphasis on the aspects of Śiva as Bhairava, whereas other Tantras, belonging to the Vidyāpīṭha, emphasise the feminine or Śakti aspect. Sanderson draws an interesting conclusion from his analysis of these schools, namely the Śaiva-Siddhānta, Mantrapīṭha, Yāmala Tantras and Trika Tantras (in ascending order):

> As we ascend through these levels, from the Mantrapīṭha to the Yāmala Tantras and thence to the Trika and the Kālī cult, we find that the feminine rises stage by stage from subordination to complete autonomy.[41]

It is generally accepted in the non-dualist or Advaita Śaiva traditions that the revelation of the Śaiva-Siddhānta Tantras/Āgamas represents a base of "common" revelation (*sāmānya*), which is more ritual-oriented and dualistic/pluralistic in its philosophy, as compared to the different traditions of the "left" (*vāma*), which are more esoteric, with a tendency to interiorise ritual, and with a non-dualistic philosophy, hence *viśeṣa*. Thus there is a sense of inclusivity in the order of ascent through the levels of esoterically/spiritually "higher" traditions. They accept the "lower" levels of Śaiva revelation also in the sense that they do not deny that their followers attain liberation through initiation (*dīkṣā*) and regular ritual practice (*samayācāra*) at the time of death. However, the higher the revelation, the more stress is put on knowledge over ritual, and primacy of non-dualism (between the soul, the world and the Divine) not only in philosophy, but also in practice: hence *paramādvaita*, an inclusive, not exclusive non-dualism, and *advaitācāra*, "the practice of non-dualism," which includes the reversion of orthodox rules and prescriptions. Their ideal is liberation-in-life (*jīvanmukti*), which means a recognition of one's own divine nature (*īśvarapratyabhijñā, svarūpaprathana*), or union with Śiva/Bhairava in a state of complete penetration (*samāveśa*). The system which had

41. *Śaivism and the Tāntric Traditions*, p. 669.

the greatest capacity of absorbing the other schools, and which had the most prominent exponent who contributed to this integration in Abhinavagupta, is Trika: the "triadic," "trinitarian" school. It comprises several triads, as we shall see later:

> The three goddesses: *parā* — *parāparā* — *aparā*
> the three metaphysical categories: Śiva — Śakti — Nara
> the three Divine Energies: *icchā* — *jñāna* — *kriyā*
> and other related triads.

This school has to be viewed at three historical levels: the early phase with its three goddesses, symbolically represented on lotuses on points of the trident or *triśūla*:

> This trident is superimposed in imagination along the central vertical axis of the worshipper's body so that the trifurcation rises through a space of twelve fingers breadth above his head, the whole from its base at the level of his navel to this summit being identified with the series of cosmic levels from gross matter to the Absolute. The central goddess, Parā, is white, beautiful and benevolent.[42]
>
> Parā has two aspects, for she is worshipped both as one of the three and as their sum and source. In this higher aspect she is called Mātṛsadbhāva (essence of the Mothers), the summit of the hierarchy of the female powers which populate the cult of *yoginī*s. Later, all this would be interpreted along more metaphysical and mystical lines. Mātṛsadbhāva was read as Essence of (All) Conscious Beings ([*pra-*]*mātṛ-*) and the three goddesses were contemplated as the three fundamental constituent powers of a universe which was consciousness only. Parā was the power of the subject-element (*pramātṛ*), Aparā that of the object-element (*prameya*) and Parāparā that of the cognitive field or medium (*pramāṇa*). — art. cit., p. 674

The Tantras of the Trika comprise the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata*, the *Tantrasadbhāva*, the *Mālinīvijayottara Tantra*, and the present *Parātrīśikā*. The first two are unpublished, but they are available in manuscripts from Nepal. The *Mālinīvijayottara* forms the basis for the most encompassing works of Abhinavagupta's Tāntric exegesis, the *Tantrāloka*, *Mālinīvijayavārttika*, and the *Tantrasāra*.

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42. A. Sanderson, *Śaivism and the Tāntric Traditions*, p. 673.

The Trika has been combined with various other Tāntric schools: the Kālīkrama or Kālīkula (Sanderson, p. 678), and the Kaula in the Eastern Transmission or Pūrvāmnāya (ibid., p. 681). The Kaula tradition goes back to the *siddhas*, and to the pervasive mythical-historical Siddha Matsyendranātha (or Macchandanāth), who brought this esoteric tradition down to earth (*avatāraka*). His veneration and recognition transcends the borders of Śaivism and of the Indian subcontinent, since he is equally known in Tibet and in Tāntric Buddhism. It is important to mention him here, because Abhinavagupta also pays obeisance to this founder of the Kaula Tāntric Yoga as one of the Masters, however remote the latter may have been historically.

> The Kaula tradition of the Trika saw itself as essentialising Tāntric practice. In this spirit it offered a much condensed form of the liturgy followed in the Tantra system, emphasising spontaneity and intensity of immersion (*tanmayībhāva, samāveśa*) over elaborate ritual. Thus the usual preliminary purification (*snāna*), the internal worship (*antaryāga*) which always precedes the external in Tāntric rites and the offering in the sacrificial fire (*homa*), which follow and repeat the worship of the deities, may all be discarded as superfluous. Moreover, the worshipper may advance from an initial stage in which he worships the full Kaula pantheon until eventually he worships only the central Kuleśvara. — Ibid., pp. 681-82

Another tradition which has entered the whole stream is the *Krama*, lit. "Sequence":[43]

> A much more elaborate or rather better documented Kaula system of Kālī worship is found in the literature of the Krama. The outstanding characteristic of this tradition is that it worships a sequential rather than a simply concentric pantheon. A series of sets of deities (*cakras*) is worshipped in a fixed sequence as the phases (*krama*) of the cyclical pulse of cognition (*saṁvit*). These phases are Emission (*sr̥ṣṭikrama*), Maintenance of the emitted (*sthitikrama*) (also called Incarnation (*avatārakrama*), Retraction of the emitted (*saṁhārakrama*) and the Nameless fourth (*anākhyakrama*), also called the Phase of the Kālīs (*kālīkrama*), in which all trace of the preceding

43. Cf. N. Rastogi, *The Krama Tāntricism of Kashmir*.

> process is dissolved into liberated and all-pervading consciousness. . . . External worship is greatly simplified and looked upon as inferior to worship in the mind, it being understood that the order of worship (*pūjākrama*) is no more than a reflection of the ever-present order of cognition itself (*saṁvitkrama*). — Ibid., pp. 683-84

Apart from the form of the Trika worshipping the three goddesses (and eventually a fourth one above them, e.g. Kālasaṁkarṣiṇī), there is a higher esoteric tradition of Trika centred on the Supreme, Absolute — in masculine or feminine or also neuter form: *Anuttara*. Hence it is called *Anuttara Trika*, the Ultimate, Unsurpassable, or also *Ekavīra* "(the tradition of spiritual) heroes,"[44] or *Parākrama*. It is *Parākrama* because the entire process (*krama*) is centred on the main Divinity: *Parā*, the Supreme (f.). We shall see in the context of the Tantra that *Parā* is at the same time the Supreme Word (*parāvāk*). This highest form of Trika is that "of the *Parātriṁśikā* [*sic*!], in which the worship of the liberationist is fully aniconic, resting entirely on the *mantra* and subjective contemplation."[45] We shall come to the spread of this esoteric tradition beyond Kashmir, especially in south India.

The present text, *Parātrīśikā*, belongs to this tradition of *Anuttara Trika*, but, as the very first verse will reveal, it is related also to the Kaula tradition (*kaulikasiddhi* is the spiritual power aimed at in verse 1). The final phase of the Trika culminates in the great synthesis of the non-dualistic Śaiva thinkers and exegetes of Kashmir, foremost in Abhinavagupta. It is Abhinavagupta who places the Trika at the highest level of all the other revelations. In the words of A. Sanderson: "His purpose is to formulate a position for the Trika that enables its followers to see it not merely as the highest revelation but as that which pervades and validates all others."[46] This "highest revelation within the Trika itself [found in *MVT* chapter 18] transcends transcendence by propagating the position that all forms of Śaiva practice, including that of the Siddhānta, are equally valid provided they are informed by the non-dualistic awareness enjoined here" (Ibid., p. 124).

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44. *Ekavīra* because it is practised by *siddhas* who are "solitary heroes", without a female partner (*dūtī*) or *yoginī*.

45. A. Sanderson, "The Visualization of the Deities of the Trika", in: A. Padoux (ed.), *Images Divines*, p. 80. In more recent publications Professor Sanderson has also adopted the correct spelling of the text as *Parātrīśikā*.

46. *The Śaiva Exegesis of Kashmir*, p. 376.

The non-dualism of the school has been established in the tradition starting with the *Śivasūtras* revealed to Vasugupta in the eighth century, followed by his *Spandakārikā* which expounds the "doctrine of vibration" of consciousness.[47] Hence follows the line of masters of the Spanda and the Pratyabhijñā School: starting from Somānanda (ninth–early tenth century) with his *Śivadṛṣṭi*, "the Vision of Śiva," who had also authored the (now lost) commentary on which Abhinavagupta bases his *Vivaraṇa* on the *Parātrīśikā*.[48] Hence the interpretation is based on such philosophical foundations as the non-dualism of Consciousness (*saṁvidadvayavāda*), and of the doctrine of Recognition (*pratyabhijñā*). It is Somānanda's disciple Utpaladeva, who had not only systematised the philosophy of Pratyabhijñā in his *Īśvarapratyabhijñā Kārikā* and in his *Siddhitrayī*, but was also a mystic of non-dualistic *bhakti*, as could be seen in his great hymn collection, the *Śivastotrāvalī*.[49] Utpaladeva's disciple in Pratyabhijñā, Lakṣmaṇagupta, was the direct teacher of Abhinavagupta, but he left no work. It was again Abhinavagupta's task to compose two extensive commentaries on Utpaladeva's *Kārikās* (called "Sūtras," as we have earlier noted), the *Īśvarapratyabhijñā Vimarśiṇī* and *Vivṛtivimarśiṇī* on the (mostly lost) *Vivṛti*.[50] This line of the tradition — without mentioning the other schools — has been continued by Abhinavagupta's pupil Kṣemarāja, a prolific commentator on the Tantras and also an original author (especially of the *Pratyabhijñāhṛdaya*, "The Heart of Recognition"). Although he has not commented on the *Parātrīśikā* or *Vivaraṇa*, he has composed a brief text summarising it : the *Parāpraveśikā*. He did not write a commentary on his teacher's *Tantrāloka*, a task that was accomplished in the thirteenth century by Rājānaka Jayaratha. It was Kṣemarāja's pupil Yogarāja who wrote a commentary on Abhinavagupta's *Paramārthasāra*.

This brief survey of the works belonging to Trika and Pratyabhijñā traditions was necessary for situating the *Vivaraṇa* in its historical and philosophical context.

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47. Also attributed to his disciple Kallaṭa.

48. Cf. *PTV* concluding verse 18, p. 105.

49. The three *siddhis* of Utpaladeva are: *Ajaḍapramātṛsiddhi, Īśvarasiddhi, Sambandhasiddhi*. Cf. A. Sanderson, *The Śaiva Exegesis of Kashmir*, p. 129. I have tried to connect these two sides of his work in my Introduction to *Śivastotrāvalī of Utpaladeva*, Exposition by Swami Lakshman Joo, pp. 1-18.

50. Fragments have been found and published by R. Torella (see Bibliography).

The position of this commentary in Abhinavagupta's works on the Trika has already been stated.

Hermeneutics and Tāntric Exegesis

Hermeneutics is derived from *Hermes*, the Greek God, the divine messenger. Besides all its philosophical refinements and intricacies, it is first of all a method which "transports" a text from one context to another, which "carries over" the meaning and reflects on the perils and transformations which may happen on the way. It is more than a matter of translation, more than exegesis, but it includes these indispensable means to make a text significant beyond its original context. India has developed several methods which are essential elements of hermeneutics, from the grammatical analysis to Vākyaśāstra, Kāvyaśāstra, Mīmāṁsā, etc.

Translating and interpreting a text over a thousand years of history into a completely different historical, cultural, social, psychological, religious, spiritual context is a task which requires a conscious effort, ideally taking into account all these factors which have shaped the original text in the first instance, and which shape our understanding of it today. Even if this exercise is taking place in an Indian context, it is nevertheless an intercultural exercise, starting from the very language in which this hermeneutics is expressed, which is already shaped by another culture and philosophy or theology. It is obvious that the present study cannot do justice to all these connected methodological issues, I can only make an attempt while remaining conscious of the implications.

A messenger — like Hermes — has to be at home in both worlds[51] between which he mediates. He has to move to and fro, but also at some point remain stable like a bridge, so that others can cross over from one side to the other. This is the aim of the present hermeneutical exercise: to make a text and a tradition accessible beyond its historical and linguistic context, which means, first of all, discovering its relevance for our present world of the twenty-first century, with its unprecedented contradictions between (material, technological) progress and (human, ethical and spiritual) regress.

51. Cf. *Ṛgveda* X.36 where the *muni*s are said to be "at home in both seas, the east and the west" (v. 5).

But hermeneutics in the present work refers to two levels of interpretation: the first one is Abhinavagupta's own hermeneutics in relation to the Tantra, there being at least three centuries between the text and the commentary, and the second, the translations into European languages (and into modern Hindi), and the present exposition.

The role of hermeneutics is essential for the tradition itself and its survival. Ernst Steinkellner writes in the context of Buddhist Tantras:

> Religious contents, beliefs, are subject to history. They stagnate and die as soon as they become unresponsive to new needs and questions arising in the societies harbouring them, but they also lose their religious value when they deviate from tradition by such changes. Hermeneutics[52] works against such deviation. Its methods have been established in order to separate, via an act of interpretation, the various forms of religious contents within a tradition in such a way that the unity with revelation is preserved in each case and that freedom is created at the same time for a rational foundation of the differences. While the possibilities of change in this way guarantees the survival of a religious tradition, it is hermeneutics which guarantees the continuity of this tradition as such.[53]

His reflections on Tantristic hermeneutics apply to our text as well, since there is the need, on the one side, to preserve the tradition, and on the other to find suitable methods to keep it alive by reinterpreting it. Eivind Kahrs says with regard to "trustworthy" methods of interpretation:

> When people share a belief system, then assurance of a change in belief cannot come from outside the system, nor can something inside it produce support except when it can be shown to rest on something independently trustworthy. To some extent such a trustworthy entity exists in the Indian tradition in the form of established and widely accepted methods of interpretation.[54]

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52. I.e. the study of those methodological principles which rule over the interpretation and explanation of revelatory texts.

53. Ernst Steinkellner, "Remarks on Tantristic Hermeneutics", in *Csoma de Körös Memorial Symposium*, ed. L. Ligeti, Budapest (Akademiai Kiado) 1978, pp. 445-46.

54. Indian Semantic Analysis, *The Nirvacana Tradition*, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 7.

In relation to sacred texts the exegetical possibilities are multiple. A. Sanderson describes them as follows:

> This style of exegesis governed by possibility rather than probability is more appropriate to the texts of scripture, which as divine revelation are not thought to be tied to the semantic limits that restrain human beings when they attempt to convey their meaning to others in ordinary or poetic utterances. Whereas human statements are assumed to be unitary, however complex, a scriptural passage may be treated without apology as conveying simultaneously as many meanings as are possible within the limits set by the exegete's beliefs and the generous disciplines of traditional text-analysis.[55]

This description applies eminently to the *Vivaraṇa*, as we shall see.

The Problem of Translation

What terminology are we going to adopt when translating some of the central and esoteric terms of the text and the commentary? Every translator had to face the same question, and there is no universal solution to it. We have got used to translating certain concepts of Indian philosophy in a particular way, with some variations, but do these translations realiy convey the various levels of meaning? In the eyes of a non-Sanskrit knowing reader, are they not sometimes more misleading than helpful?

The concept of *cit/caitanya/saṁvit* is a classic example. First of all, the three terms are not strictly synonyms, but they have been uniformly translated by "consciousness," sometimes with the adjective "pure" or "absolute." Ernst Fürlinger has devoted a chapter in his book *The Touch of Śakti* to the question: "Is *cit* Consciousness?"[56] His conclusion, after going through arguments of the philosophical implications of "consciousness," "*Bewusstsein*," in Western philosophy, leads to the suggestion to leave such terms untranslated. But this does not solve the question of communicability — after all, the reader has the right to connect to the meaning without every time looking at the Glossary.

The problem of *cit* raises the question of the East-West understanding or

55. A. Sanderson, in: *Sāmarasya*, p. 141, and see also his footnote 123.

56. E. Fürlinger, *The Touch of Śakti*, pp. 40-53.

misunderstanding of the term "consciousness": Western philosophy and psychology definitely understands it as individual consciousness. Indian philosophy definitely understands *cit* as universal — you cannot speak of the *cit* of a certain person, although the person possesses, participates in *cit* (depending on the philosophical system, dualist, non-dualist, etc.). An intermediary solution is certainly to translate the term, maybe to capitalise it, and put the Sanskrit in brackets.

The specific terms of Trika and Pratyabhijñā present even more problems: to give only the example of *prakāśa-vimarśa*, the basic conceptual pair of its metaphysics. They are usually translated as "Light (of Consciousness)" and "Reflection," or "reflective awareness," etc.[57]

Muller-Ortega combines the two terms as "self-reflecting illumination,"[58] and translates them separately as "primordial light" and "self-apprehension" or "self-referential capacity" (ibid., p. 96). Padoux translates *vimarśa* as "self-representation" or "creative self-awareness of consciousness."[59] Torella's translation is both balanced and intelligible: "light" and "reflective awareness."[60]

Sanderson, on whose critical and extensive work I rely heavily, has chosen the terms "manifestation" for *prakāśa*, and, in his earlier work "self-cognition" for *vimarśa* (1988: 695), in his later articles he renders *vimarśa* by "representation."[61] Even though I agree with most of his interpretations, I find it difficult to accept the translation of these crucial terms, basically because of their implications in Western philosophy.[62] "Representation" has more the connotations of *vikalpa*.

Prakāśa is more the source of manifestation than manifestation itself. The symbolic value of "light" in all philosophical and spiritual traditions makes this

57. L. Silburn translates in French mostly as "lumière consciente" and "prise de conscience."

58. *The Triadic Heart of Śiva*, p. 95.

59. *Vāc*, Index, p. 458.

60. Cf. *The Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā*, tr. of *IPK* I. 5.10-11, et al., p. 118.

61. Cf. 2005 (in *Sāmarasya*), pp. 93-94.

62. Cf. also the criticism by Isabelle Ratié in her article on "Otherness in the Pratyabhijñā philosophy" (*Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 2007), where she gives a survey of the different translations with a similar criticism of the term "representation" for *vimarśa*. See her discussion on *prakāśa* and *vimarśa*, pp. 18-20.

literal translation more meaningful than any interpretation. Of course, it has to be kept in mind that *prakāśa* stands for Śiva as the source of illumination, and *vimarśa* for Śakti as his self-reflective awareness. Both, in the texts and in the usage in the living tradition, *vimarśa* also refers to "meditation" as the self-reflection of consciousness.[63]

David P. Lawrence translates *prakāśa* as "awareness," and *vimarśa* by "recognitive apprehension,"[64] but this raises the same problem regarding *prakāśa*.

Mark Dyczkowski defines it as follows:

> Absolute consciousness understood as the unchanging ontological ground of all appearing is termed *prakāśa*. As the creative awareness of its own Being, the absolute is called *vimarśa*.
>
> *Prakāśa* and *vimarśa* — the Divine Light of consciousness and the reflective awareness this Light has of its own nature — together constitute the all-embracing fullness (*pūrṇatā*) of consciousness.[65]

The matter becomes more complicated when we deal with Tāntric concepts which are both, specific to the tradition and symbolic, multi-layered. This concerns the central terms contained in the very first verse: *kaulika* and the related complex *kula*, *kaula*, and *khecarī* (and their compounds *kaulikasiddhi* and *khecarī-samatā*). How to bring out the complexity of these concepts in one or even more words? Muller-Ortega has coined the term "Embodied Cosmos."

> This complex baggage of meaning borne by the term *kula* presents a problem for its translation as well as the translation of its related forms, *kaula*, *kaulinī*, *kaulika* and *kaulikī*. Clearly, the term *group* simply does not generate the rich resonance and wide range of applicability that is intended by *kula*. We may posit as a primary translation something like "embodied Cosmos." It is clear that the Kaula tradition teaches the primary importance of the body as the essential tool of *sādhanā*. In an important sense, following the logic just outlined, the Cosmos is the body.
>
> . . .

63. In the living tradition comparable to what Ramaṇa Maharṣi calls *ātma-vicāra*, more in the Vedāntic sense: self-reflection.

64. Remarks on Abhinavagupta's use of the analogy of reflection, p. 586.

65. *The Doctrine of Vibration*, p. 59.

> Abhinavagupta comments: Thus the body should be seen as full of all the paths, filled with varied operations of time, and seat of all the movements of time and of space. The body seen in this way is in itself composed of all the divinities, and thus must be made an object of contemplation, of adoration and of the rites of fulfilment. He who penetrates in the body achieves liberation.

He continues by saying that,

> "the *mantra* is the instrument by which one comes to perceive the divinities within the body."[66] Thus the body, like the cosmos, can be seen as a separate unit of manifestation, which is composed of many different parts, all of which are interrelated by the presence of the divine within it.[67]

Unless one enters into the spirit of the *kula/kaula* tradition, the neologism "Embodied Cosmos" will not help the reader to understand the implications. For, as in the case of consciousness, the body also carries such different connotations in the non-dualist Tantras. Many of the misunderstandings regarding the sexual aspect of these Tantras are precisely based on a limited understanding of "body."

These remarks on the untranslatability of the specific terms and concepts of Trika only intend to state the problem, and to remain aware of the implications, they cannot solve the difficulties involved.

The State of Scholarship on the Parātrīśikā Vivaraṇa

After the first edition in the "Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies" (1918) the *Parātrīśikā Vivaraṇa* has received the attention of the pioneer scholar on Abhinavagupta, K.C. Pandey.[68] The text has obviously been taught to the last Ācārya of Kashmir Śaivism in Kashmir, Swami Lakshman Joo Raina, by his Śaivaśāstraguru, Pandit Maheshvar Razdan. Having also access to manuscripts, Swami Lakshman Joo made amendments in the faulty text of the "Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies," and he taught the text to various scholars in Hindi, Kashmiri and English. Two of his disciples prepared annotated translations: in Hindi by Nilkanth Gurtoo, in English by Jaideva Singh.[69] Raniero Gnoli prepared independently an edition with

66. Quote from *TĀ* XIII.6-7.

67. P.E. Muller-Ortega, *The Triadic Heart of Śiva*, pp. 59-60.

68. See Abhinavagupta, pp. 44f.

69. See Bibliography.

an Italian translation along with an introduction and critical notes. All these editions and translations will be taken into account in the present study. But the text is so terse and intense that it requires an exhaustive commentary to be understood and elucidated. The *Mālinīvijayottara Tantra*, the other most authoritative Tantra of Trika, has received such a detailed treatment by Prof. Alexis Sanderson[70] and by his student Somadeva Vasudeva.[71] Prof. Sanderson, in his extensive work on the history and the textual traditions of the different schools of Kashmir Śaivism, has placed the text in its context, to which we will refer later.

V. Raghavan, in his study on "Abhinavagupta and his Works,"[72] has given several important references to the *Vivaraṇa* in the context of Abhinavagupta's works, without having gone into the content. It is André Padoux who has given an interpretation of the central themes of the *Parātrīśikā Vivaraṇa* in relation to the Word (*vāc*) and *mantra* in his illuminating work: *Vāc. The Concept of the Word in Selected Hindu Tantras*.[73] Another central concept has been dealt with by Paul Muller-Ortega: the theme of the heart, however based on the short commentary on the *Parātrīśikā*, the *Laghuvṛtti*, which was assumed to be equally by Abhinavagupta. Although the theme of the heart is very much related, there are some fundamental differences between the two commentaries.

All the authors and works mentioned have contributed to making the importance of the Tantra and its *Vivaraṇa* known, and to situate it in the entire corpus of Abhinavagupta's works. But they still leave the desideratum of a comprehensive analysis and exegesis of this extraordinary text. The present work is an attempt at an interpretation, and I can only subscribe to the words of R. Gnoli, justifying his study and translation:

> What has attracted me in this work was not only its difficulty, due to internal and external causes, that is to say, the abstrusiveness of the arguments which are sometimes only hinted at, and which seem to expect in the reader a deep knowledge of the school. . . . The world is full of difficult texts which it is better to let them rest in the

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70. The Doctrine of the *Mālinīvijayottaratantra*.

71. The Yoga of the *Mālinīvijayottaratantra*.

72. See Bibliography.

73. See Bibliography.

> archives, for the curiosity and enjoyment of a few and waiting for better times to come. But the truth is that many pages of this commentary are, in my opinion, among the most beautiful and interesting of the philosophical literature in Sanskrit, written in a language which is occasionally redundant, but always lively and powerful, which reveals the immediacy of the experience and the depth of an original thought attempting to find a way among the limitations of language, sometimes with difficulty.[74] (emphasis mine)

In fact, Gnoli's Introduction is the only attempt so far[75] for an understanding of the entire text, apart from the thematic studies by A. Padoux and P. Muller-Ortega (the latter conditioned by the *Laghuvṛtti*). Hence there is the need for a detailed study and interpretation, going into the major themes and sub-themes of both, Tantra and *Vivaraṇa*, with the hope to throw light on the depth of thought and experience expressed therein. In this too, I follow the suggestion of R. Gnoli:

> I realised that certain obscurities remained. But I am confident . . . that this effort of mine can at least be useful to those who, after me, will devote themselves to the study of this text, and that this volume, with all its imperfections, will however remain a point of reference for more exhaustive and perfect future studies.[76]

The Authorship of the Laghuvṛtti

The short commentary on the *Parātrīśikā*, the *Laghuvṛtti*, also called *Anuttaratattvavimarśinī*, has been ascribed to Abhinavagupta by the colophon. The author says that he follows the interpretation by Utpala. This attribution has been accepted by all the scholars who have written on Abhinavagupta, and who have translated and studied the text: K.C. Pandey, A. Padoux, R. Gnoli, P. Muller-Ortega.[77] However, they could not help but notice some important variants in the text of the Tantra, and marked differences in the style of the commentary and in

74. Tr. from the Italian, pp. XII-XIV of his Introduzione.

75. Within the limits of 22 pages.

76. Introduzione, p. xxxiv, translated from Italian.

77. See Bibliography for their translations.

certain interpretations.[78] This is not the place to go into a detailed comparison of the two versions[79] and of the two commentaries. One example of a variant in the text may suffice, which occurs in the very first verse: Instead of *sadyaḥ* (immediately), as in the text commented upon in the *Vivaraṇa*, the *Laghuvṛtti* text has *svataḥ* (of its own, spontaneously). And Abhinavagupta gives much importance to the word *sadyaḥ* in the *Vivaraṇa*. A. Sanderson is the first scholar who has raised a doubt as to the authorship of the *Laghuvṛtti* and its place of origin. Based on several arguments he has located the text as of south Indian origin.[80]

Since the arguments advanced for placing the text in south India are the same, I may be allowed to quote his reference to another text, the *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvimarśinīvyākhyā*:[81]

> That the *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvimarśinīvyākhyā* is south-Indian is strongly suggested by its citing sources that though rooted in the traditions of Kashmirian Śaiva non-dualism (1) were not known in Kashmir before modern times, (2) have been transmitted only in south-Indian manuscripts, and (3) have received commentaries from and been cited only by authors who are south-Indian . . .. A case in point is the *Parātriṁśikālaghuvṛtti*. . . . This is attributed to Abhinavagupta by its colophon, and that attribution has been accepted without question by modern scholars. But there are good reasons to conclude that the attribution is spurious. In addition to the three criteria for doubt just stated it (4) shows a redaction of the *Parātrīśikā* (*Parātriṁśikā*) that deviates from that adopted by Abhinavagupta in the *Parātrīśikavivaraṇa*, a much longer commentary on this text that is certainly his, (5) deviates from the views and approach of that commentary, and (6) lacks the hallmarks of Abhinavagupta's style and, in my estimate, his intellectual brilliance.[82]

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78. Cf. A. Padoux, *La Parātrīśikālaghuvṛtti de Abhinavagupta*, p. 9, about the weaknesses of the text also pp. 15-16.

79. See Appendix.

80. Cf. also V. Raghavan, *Abhinavagupta and His Works*, p. 17. where he is listing three MSS, all from south India (Madras, Tanjore, Trivandrum). Not a single Śāradā Ms has been found so far.

81. A. Sanderson, "A Commentary on the Opening Verses", in *Sāmarasya*, p. 142, footnote 124.

82. Cf. also his remarks in "The Śaiva Exegesis of Kashmir", p. 379.

The fact that the only manuscript on whose basis the text was published in the KSTS was brought by Swami Lakshman Joo from south India (Madras?) in 1936 is a further proof for the convincing arguments of Professor Sanderson.[83]

B.N. Pandita, in his *Kāśmīra Śaivadarśanabṛhatkoṣaḥ* (*Encyclopaedia of Kāśmira Śaivism*) has independently come to the same conclusion.[84] He gives eight reasons why this work cannot be by the great Ācārya Abhinavagupta, some being the same as Sanderson's arguments (different readings of the Tantra, style, lack of depth, etc.). The only difference is that he did not have the reasons for giving a south Indian origin of the text.

Apart from other differences, it should be surprising that the two main hermeneutical schemes of the *Vivaraṇa* are totally absent from the *Laghuvṛtti*, namely the four levels of *vāc*, and the doctrine of *sarvaṁ sarvātmakam*.

The Spread of Anuttara Trika / Parākrama

Without going into historical details it is necessary at least to refer to the influence of the *Parātrīśikā*, the "root text" (A. Sanderson) of the Parākrama, in other parts of India and on the whole development of Śakti worship to this day. In spite of its highly esoteric nature and its origin in Kashmir, the Tantra, its central Deity Parā and Her seminal *mantra* has pervaded large parts of the spiritual landscape of the subcontinent.

It is worth noting the fact that Kṣemarāja, the foremost disciple of Abhinavagupta, composed a very brief and simplified version of the *Parātrīśikā* in his *Parāpraveśikā*, "Entrance into the Parā (meditation/realisation of)," which shows that the intention was to popularise the Tantra and to make its secret doctrine accessible to practitioners who were not able to study and absorb the difficult *Vivaraṇa*, intended for advanced disciples. In this abbreviation he gives a condensed explanation of the thirty-six *tattva*s and quotes one verse of the *Parātrīśikā*: *yathā nyagrodhabījasthaḥ* . . . (v. 25), introducing the central *mantra*: *hṛdayabīja*, "the seed of the heart" (SAUḤ). He stresses the import of the Tantra which leads to

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83. See Introduction to the KSTS edition of the *Laghuvṛtti*.

84. *kenāpyarvācīnena paṇḍitena viracitā kāpi ṭīkā yā tenācāryābhinavaguptakṛteti prakhyāpitā māhātmyavardhanārthamasyāḥ* . . . (*Parātrīśikālaghuvṛttiḥ*), 2005, pp. 375-76. →

jīvanmukti by knowledge of and absorption in the *mantra*, without the necessity of ritual initiation, while living a life in the world.[85]

It is precisely by the *mantra* (SAUḤ) that the meditation of Parā can be recognised, beyond ritual and iconic worship. And "It is this system, known variously as the Anuttara, Ekavīra or Parākrama, which appears to have been the most enduring and influential."[86] Madhurāja, the ascetic disciple of Abhinavagupta from Madurai in the far south, ascribes his enlightenment to the Parākrama: he has mastered the universe, being overwhelmed (*ā-krānta*) by the tradition of Parā due to which he has realised the imperishable non-duality of the Lord.[87] Since he has attained enlightenment from his *guru*, Abhinavagupta, it is also clear that he received from him the initiation into the (*mantra* of) Parā. While enumerating the different schools of which Abhinavagupta was a master, he mentions *ekavīra* as the last, i.e. the culmination of his knowledge.[88] Madhurāja's disciple Varadarāja/ Kṛṣṇadāsa says of him that he has "attained sudden penetration into the totality of the thirty-six *tattva*s through the Parākrama."[89]

No wonder that the tradition travelled to the south, where Cidambaram was already a centre of Mahārtha or Krama and Śivādvaita.[90] Not only in the Tamil country, Parākrama was received in Maharashtra, where the influence of non-dualist Śaivism was already known, as in the highly mystical work of Jñāneśvara

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85. *Īdṛśaṁ hṛdayabījaṁ tattvato yo veda samāviśati ca sa paramārthato dīkṣitaḥ prāṇān dhārayan laukikavad vartamāno jīvanmukta eva bhavati* / conclusion.

86. A. Sanderson, "The Visualization of the Deities of the Trika", p. 80.

87. *śaktitrayaikaśaraṇe parākrāntaviśvadikcakre* ।
madhurāje mayi jīvati anaśvaraṁ nūnamīśvarādvaitam ॥ — KSTS edn. v. 40, p. 6.

88. Cf. *Gurunāthaparāmarśa* 18 (v. 20 in V. Raghavan's edition):

siddhānta-bhairava-yāmala-kaula-trika-ekavīrānām ।
abhinavaguptaḥ śrīmān ācāryapada sthito jayati ॥

In Sanderson's translation: "The glorious Abhinavagupta reigns victorious, for he is the ultimate human authority for all who know the Siddhānta, the Vāma, the Bhairava, the Yāmala, the Kaula, the Trika or/and the Ekavīra." (art. cit. p. 80, note 191).

89. *Śivasūtra Vārttika* 212-14, tr. by A. Sanderson, art. cit. p. 80.

90. Cf. *Mahārthamañjarī* by Maheśvarānanda (twelfth century). Cf. L. Silburn, *La Mahārthamañjarī de Maheśvarānanda*.

(Jñāndeva), *Amṛtānubhava* (or *Anubhavāmṛta*), "The Experience of Immortal Nectar"[91] in Maharashtra in the thirteenth century. The great Sanskrit scholars who developed the Śākta tradition of goddess Lalitā, Umānandanātha (author of *Nityotsava*), Aparājitānandanātha (author of *Saubhāgyodaya*) and the famous Bhāskararāya Makhin of Banaras (author of the *Lalitāsahasranāmabhāṣya*), etc. were also Maharashtrians. The Parākrama thus merged with the cult of Lalitā Tripurasundarī, "the most influential and widespread of the Tāntric traditions in medieval and modern India,"[92] which became more dominant in the south.[93]

A connection with the tradition of Parā and her *mantra* was also discovered in Orissa.[94] In a Paippalāda Atharvavedic ritual manual, mostly concerned with magic, one section is dedicated to *Muktimahāmantra* and *parājapavidhi*, the rule for reciting the *mantra* of Parā which has the sole purpose of leading to liberation. Here the *mantra* is not in coded form but expressed directly.[95] I refer to A. Sanderson's detailed presentation of the texts and their analysis.[96]

My purpose in this introduction is not to enter into a historical discussion on the relation between the Parākrama of the *Parātrīśikā* and the Śrīvidyā tradition. What we have to note here is the fact that the Anuttara Trika or Parākrama has not remained limited to Kashmir, but has pervaded the subcontinent, from west to east and mainly to the south, where the Śrīvidyā tradition has taken over the worship and meditation of Parā.

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91. Sri Jnandev's Anubhavamrut, *The Immortal Experience of Being*, tr. from Marathi by Dilip Chitre, New Delhi, Sahitya Akademi, 1996. In his introduction the translator recognises the indebtedness of Jñāndev to (so-called) "Kashmir Śaivism" (cf. pp. 7-12).

92. A. Sanderson, *Meaning in Tāntric Ritual*, p. 47.

93. Cf. Annette Wilke, "A New Theology of Bliss: 'Vedāntisation' of Tantra and 'Tantrisation' of Advaita Vedānta in the Lalitātriśatibhāṣya", in *Sāmarasya*, pp. 149-75.

94. Cf. A. Sanderson, *Atharvavedins in Tāntric Territory*, for texts and details.

95. Cf. *Paippalādavaśādiṣaṭkarmapaddhati*, pp. 89-101.

96. Sanderson raises the two points: (1) whether the *mantra* (SAUḤ) has been received from the Kashmirian version of the Tantra or from south India, and (2) that the Atharvavedic manuals describe a ritual and yogic procedure to practise the *mantra* which is not found in Kashmir and in the *Vivaraṇa*. However, the root text remains the PT and the revelation it contains of the "seed of the heart", the *mantra* SAUḤ.

My Approach

The conditions and prerequisites attached to reading the text and practising it (*adhikāra*) apply in greater measure if one has to comment on it. Apart from the qualities mentioned for the *adhikārin* one has to fulfil two qualifications: (a) to understand the tradition from within, without which no understanding in the real sense would be possible; and (b) to see the text from a hermeneutical distance which allows new insights. Every commentary is also a contribution to continuing the tradition: *sam-pra-dā* means precisely to pass it on, which is not a static but a dynamic process.

Apart from the obstacles — inner and outer — presenting themselves at the time of composing a text (which will be discussed in the context of the *maṅgala-ślokas*), there is another difficulty. Abhinavagupta states it beautifully at the beginning of his *Īśvarapratyabhijñā Vivṛtivimarśinī*. Before undertaking such a stupendous task as of composing a commentary:

> Initially one should suppress identification with the body and the other levels of the individual self — this is the "bowing down" [that characterises homage] — and so enter the state of immersion (*samāveśaḥ*) in which one realises the supremacy of the nature of Parameśvara. . . . During this [immersion] the universe too is one with this true self, being nothing in its ultimate reality but undivided and autonomous consciousness. So [while the state continues] what can impede whom, and where? Thereafter, when one is producing the text, one has to focus on the individual self, since otherwise one would be incapable of composing the treatise, which can be accomplished only if it is brought down to the level of articulate speech. But [then] the hinderers have no power [to impede one], because one's inner force, which [now] blazes [more] intensely under the influence of the greater power of the impression of that state of immersion, has inspired one to abandon one's [earlier] faith in the state of differentiation.[97]

In other words, one has first to rise to the level of insight and inspiration (*pratibhā*) which alone can make one capable of understanding the text and to elucidate its meaning, but then one has to descend to the level of *vaikharī* (the "gross" word),

97. *IPVV*, vol. I, p. 18, tr. A. Sanderson in *Sāmarasya*, pp. 91-92.

and hence from universal consciousness to individual consciousness. "Descending" is sometimes as difficult as "ascending," but what remains is the "impression of the state of absorption, union or immersion," *samāveśa saṁskāra*. It is that impression which not only protects from further hindrances, but which assures an approach to the text which is in congruence with its purport.

In this sense I am laying my cards on the table by acknowledging my double *adhikāra*: One is my initiation into Trika and Pratyabhijñā by its last Master, Swami Lakshman Joo of Kashmir, a unique personal union of saint and scholar, who was also the teacher of all important scholars on non-dual Śaivism of Kashmir;[98] the second is my training in European Indology. Even then it is unavoidable that there are knots in the text that I have not been able to solve.

The choice before me was to write a scholarly commentary which would be meaningful and accessible only to specialists, or to try to open up the text for the understanding of readers interested in the philosophy and spirituality of the tradition of non-dualist Kashmir Śaivism. Although there is no absolute separation between the two ways of presenting a text, I have chosen the second option which tries to give a key to this difficult text which should also lead to the *cit-camatkāra*, or the wonder and joy of consciousness, inherent in every conscious being.[99]

I may add a biographical as well as geographical personal note: The south Indian commentary on the *Parātrīśikā*, the *Tātparyaṭīkā*,[100] praises Śiva as dwelling in four sacred places, which are the four centres for the tradition of the Trika or Anuttara Trika. Apart from Kashmir, its place of origin, these are given as Kāśī (=

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98. Lilian Silburn, Jaideva Singh, André Padoux, Alexis Sanderson, Mark Dyczkowski, and others besides the Kashmiri scholars. Cf. the revealing article by Prof. A. Sanderson in *Saṁvidullāsaḥ*.

99. I find an ideal model for such an enterprise in the philosopher Pierre Hadot, a great specialist on Plotinus, who has presented him in a way which makes the reading an exercise in joyful spiritual understanding: Pierre Hadot, *Plotin ou la simplicité du regard* (Plotinus or the simplicity of the look), Paris (Gallimard), 1997.

100. Also called *Parātrīśikātātparyadīpikā* (ed. Shri Krishnananda Sagara, Varanasi, 1987). This is a verse summary of the *Laghuvṛtti*, both being of south-Indian origin. Verse 3 reads:

śrīmatkailāsa-kaśmīra-kāśī-vyāghrapurī-sthitam |
trikārthadarśinaṁ vande devaṁ somāṁśabhūṣaṇam ||

Varanasi), Kailāsa (in Tibet) and Cidambaram (in Tamil Nadu). These four sacred centres happen to be among the most important places in my life in India and in my spiritual pilgrimage and search for understanding the Indian tradition. In Kashmir I have found access to the living tradition by being accepted as disciple of Swami Lakshman Joo[101] and experiencing the depth and beauty of this spirituality in his person and teaching. Kāśī is my home since forty years. Kailāsa was the most important pilgrimage in my life which I could undertake in 1998.[102] And Cidambaram, the south-Indian centre of Trika, has been an inspiring place of research, teaching and enjoying its ritual and artistic traditions. I believe that spirituality is not separated from geography.[103]

In the end I may repeat the words of Abhinavagupta by substituting his name for Somānanda, when he says at the end of his work:

> *tattattvanirmalasthitivibhāgihṛdaye svayaṁ praviṣṭamiva* |
> *śrī abhinavaguptamataṁ vimarśya mayā nibaddhamidam* ||[104]

> I have written this work after reflecting and meditating on the thought of Abhinavagupta that has spontaneously entered my heart which shares the same pure state of truth.

Text Editions and Translations Used

Preparing a critical edition of the *Parātrīśikā Vivaraṇa* (*PTV*) was not possible within the scope and time limit of this project, but it is planned for the future, on the basis of the Mss obtained and printed editions (see Bibliography). For the purpose of this study I am primarily following the text edition and translation by Jaideva Singh. In case of important variants or doubts I refer to R. Gnoli's edition and translation, as well as N.K. Gurtoo's Hindi translation. I therefore quote the page

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101. Cf. Bettina Bäumer, "The Power of Pure Awareness", in *Saṁvidullāsaḥ*.

102. Cf. *Sāmarasya*, *Lokayātrā*, pp. xvii-xxii, and B. Imhasly, *A Journey to Mount Kailash*, pp. 17-22.

103. Cf. my paper presented at a seminar in Srinagar, Centre for Kashmir Studies: "From Regional Identity to Universal Consciousness: The Case of Abhinavagupta" (November 2006, to be published).

104. *PTV* concluding verse 18, changing Somānanda to Abhinavagupta.

numbers of Jaideva Singh's edition and translation.[105] Where I change or modify his translation, it is indicated as such. Wherever I felt it necessary I made my own translation. The first edition in the "Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies" is so faulty that I do not use it, since it has already been corrected by the two, respectively three editions mentioned.

The text published by Jaideva Singh is not a critical edition in the sense of giving variants from Mss, but it is based on the corrections by Swami Lakshman Joo. These, in turn, are based on the corrections by his teacher Pandit Maheshvar Razdan (or Rājānaka Maheśvara), one of the leading pandits of the Research Department of the Kashmir State, which brought out the "Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies." He had access to the Mss of the *Parātrīśikā Vivaraṇa* in the Research Department which he used for his corrections. In his turn, Swami Lakshman Joo was in possession of some *Śāradā* Mss which he used, in addition, to prepare the corrected version which he taught to Jaideva Singh and Nilkanth Gurtoo.[106] These Mss are now in possession of the "Ishvar Ashram Trust" in New Delhi, but copies were not made available for comparing or editing.

The references to the Sanskrit text (Skt. with page numbers) are given from the edition of Jaideva Singh.

The purpose of the extensive quotations is that the reader need not go to the book (Jaideva Singh's translation) for the references.

I am aware of the limitations of this approach because of the difficulties of the text.

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105. It is by and large correct but in many cases, specially in the latter part, he makes additions which are not in the text. I therefore preferred to give a more literal translation.

106. Oral information received from Prabha Devi who attended all the teachings of the *PTV* by Swami Lakshman Joo.

Śāradā Ms of PTV with marginal notes (Research Library Srinagar).

1

The Entrance Gates
Maṅgalaślokas
(Benedictory Verses)

THE structure of the text can be compared with a temple structure, and approaching a sacred text to approaching a temple. The first act of the pilgrim or devotee is to remove his or her shoes, not merely as a sign of respect, but of baring oneself of egoistic thoughts in order to encounter the Deity with a free mind. While approaching a sacred text, this act implies a hermeneutic *epoche*, an act of openness and surrender. The author of a commentary enters his text through the entrance gates or *gopurams* of the benedictory verses or *maṅgalaśloka*s.

To carry this metaphor further, the devotee passes through various gates and courtyards or *prākāra*s, before entering the main temple, worshipping deities inside shrines, and finally entering the *garbhagṛha* or sanctum. Before offering worship in the innermost sanctum, he admires the outer spire or *śikhara*. We may compare the text with a temple constructed around the same time, the Bṛhadīśvara at Tanjore, whose spire comprises storeys representing the 36 *tattva*s of Śaiva cosmology. This corresponds to the cosmology contained in the Tantra, both implying the universal radiation of the innermost Deity: in the temple the immense *śivaliṅga*, proportionate to the entire structure. In the Tantra the deity enshrined in the centre is present in the form of the *bījamantra*, hence also called *hṛdayabīja*, "seed of the heart."

This metaphor also shows the parallel between the external worship in Śaiva Siddhānta, and the purely internal worship in Trika, where "it is the *mantra*s rather than the iconic forms which may be associated with them that are the essential embodiments of the deities in Tāntric worship. There are cults of aniconic *mantra*s but not of icons which are not *mantra*s."[1]

1. A. Sanderson, *Meaning in Tāntric Ritual*, with reference to *Tantrāloka* 27.1-13, p. 21.

The traditional way of entering a sacred text is through the benedictory verses or *maṅgalaślokas*, which, according to Kāvyaśāstra, have the functions of seeking blessing from one's chosen divinity (*āśirvāda*), offering salutation or adoration to the divinity (*namaskāra*), and/or providing a hint at the content of the text (*vastunirdeśa*).[2] The function of these verses is said to remove the obstacles that are likely to present themselves both in composing the text and in studying it and realising its content. The main obstacles being distractions, these verses express and invite to a meditation, focusing the mind on the chief objective of the text.[3]

The first *maṅgalaśloka* is so significant for Abhinavagupta's Tāntric works that he has used it at the beginning of each of his texts on Trika: the *Tantrāloka*, *Tantrasāra* (shorter version of the first), and the *Mālinīvijayavārttika*. Chronologically, according to Sanderson, the *Parātrīśikā Vivaraṇa* would have been composed after the *Mālinīvijayavārttika*, and before the *Tantrāloka*, but considering the choice of words this first *maṅgala* appears most fitting for the *Parātrīśikā* — especially the prominent position given to the heart (*hṛdaya*) and to the Absolute (*anuttara*), central themes of the Tantra and its exegesis by Abhinavagupta.

Verse 1

vimalakalāśrayābhinavasṛṣṭimahā jananī
bharitatanuś ca pañcamukhaguptarucir janakaḥ ।
tadubhayayāmalasphuritabhāvavisargamayaṁ
hṛdayam anuttarāmṛtakulaṁ mama saṁsphuratāt ॥ 1 ॥

May my heart shine forth, embodying the bliss of the ultimate, (for it is) one with the state of absolute potential made manifest in the fusion of these two, the "Mother" grounded in pure representation, radiant in ever new genesis, and the "father," all-enfolding (Bhairava), who maintains the light (of consciousness) through his five faces (formed from the emissions reduced through the fusion of these two, my mother Vimalā, whose greatest joy was in my birth, and my father (Nara)Siṁhagupta, (when both were) all-embracing (in their union)). — tr. A. Sanderson[4]

2. Cf. Daṇḍin, *Kāvyādarśa* I.14.

3. Cf. Jayaratha on *Tantrāloka* I.1.

4. In *Sāmarasya*. If no name of a translator is mentioned, the translation is mine, p. 89.

Before coming to an interpretation, we may see some other translations and analyse the verse literally. Jaideva Singh translates as follows (leaving out the brackets):

> May my heart, whose very nature is manifestation bursting into view by the union of both (viz. Śiva and Śakti), which is the very emblem of supreme immortality be fully flourished.
>
> — First interpretation

In the second interpretation he renders:

> May my heart which is full of the supreme quintessence of reality, and which is the product of the exuberance of emotion due to the mating of both (i.e. my father and mother) expand in supreme consciousness. The mother is one whose name is constituted by the letters *Vimalā* and whose delight consisted in giving birth to Abhinava. The father is one whose glory is known by the appellation Siṁhagupta and who is complete in himself. — pp. 1-2

We can see the difficulty in combining the two meanings in a single translation. J. Hanneder has simplified it in a single translation, which of course is in need of an interpretation.

> The mother is resplendent (*mahas*) with the ever new creation that rests on the immaculate power,
> and the father, whose form is full, has hidden his desire in his five faces.
> May my heart which is the emission of vibrancy from the couple and [therefore] full of the supreme nectar shine.[5]

R. Gnoli gives a poetic version in his Italian translation of the *Tantrāloka*:

> Naturato dell'emissione vibrata splendente
> a causa dell'unione dei due — il padre, dal corpo
> pieno e dalla luce adornata
> di cinque volti, e la madre, gloriosa
> della creazione novissima basata
> sulla parte piu pura di luna — deh vibri, deh splenda,
> immortale famiglia senza superiore, il mio cuore![6]

5. J. Hanneder, *Abhinavagupta's Philosophy of Revelation*, p. 59.

6. Luce dei Tantra, p. 3.

In my German translation of the *Tantrasāra* I had also to use two versions in order to bring out the double meaning:

> Möge mein Herz, das die Ganzheit
> des transzendenten, unsterblichen Nektars in sich enthält,
> bestehend aus der Schöpferkraft,
> die der Vereinigung der beiden (Śiva und Śakti) entspringt,
> sich voll öffnen.
> (Die beiden:) Die Mutter (Śakti) ist der Ursprung der makellosen Energie,
> erfüllt mit der (immer) neuen Schöpfung;
> der Vater (Śiva), der in sich vollkommen ist,
> offenbart sich in fünf Gesichtern.[7]

Since A. Sanderson has published an exhaustive commentary on the opening verses of the *Tantrasāra*, it is difficult to add any new interpretation to this condensed verse, which is all the more important to understand, since Abhinavagupta has given it such a prominent place in his major works. We may first dissolve it into its components, before coming to Sanderson's interpretation.

Vimala-kalā-āśraya : the support of the pure energy (of the moon), *kalā* means here *amākalā*, the 17th phase of the moon, which, in Tāntric symbolism, is the transcendent phase beyond the 16 *kalā*s representing fullness.

Vimalā is also the name of Abhinavagupta's mother.

abhinava-sṛṣṭi-mahā : the joy in the new creation — with the double meaning, the joy in the birth of Abhinava (related to the mother).

jananī : the Śakti as the universal Mother, or the mother of Abhinava.

bharita-tanus : whose body, i.e. whose nature is full, complete.

pañcamukha-gupta-rucir : whose glory (or desire) is hidden in his five faces.

Pañcamukha refers to the five energies: *cid-ānanda-icchā-jñāna-kriyā* (consciousness-bliss-will-knowledge-activity), which both hide and reveal the glory of Śiva. The five faces also refer to Sadāśiva.

7. Abhinavagupta, *Wege ins Licht*, p. 78.

Pañcamukha has another meaning, i.e. *siṁha* (lion), and together with *gupta* it refers to the name of Abhinavagupta's father (Nara)Siṁhagupta.

janakaḥ : Father, as noted by Sanderson, Śiva is never addressed as father in this tradition, and the double meaning referring to Abhinavagupta's parents is strongly hinted at by the use of this common expression.

tad-ubhaya-yāmala : the union of these two (the Śakti or universal Mother, and Śiva/Bhairava), at the human level the union of the parents of Abhinavagupta.

sphurita-bhāva-visargamayam : which consists in creativity in a state of vibrancy. The root *sphur* occurs twice in the verse, "to shine, to sparkle, to vibrate, to be manifest," etc.; here *sphurita* is an adjective, but the verb coming at the end provides a strong accent on the pulsating, radiant, unfolding vibrancy: *saṁsphuratāt*. It implies the joyful dynamism of manifestation (*vikāsa*).

One of the central terms which hints at the entire following text of the *Parātrīśikā* is *visarga*, emission, with the implied meaning in grammar, where the two dots stand for the unfolding of the single *bindu* into Śiva and Śakti, the beginning of creation. *Visarga*, creativity, takes place at the core of reality, and it is a threefold emission: cosmic, bodily, and in language.

-mayam: consisting of, full of creativity.

hṛdayam : the subject of the sentence comes in the last line as the key to the whole verse: it is the Heart which is to unfold and to be illumined or to shine forth. Here the central theme of the Heart is stated which will be developed in the Tantra and *Vivaraṇa* at different levels. The Heart is certainly more central to the *Parātrīśikā Vivaraṇa* than to the other texts where the same *maṅgala* occurs. Is it possible that Abhinavagupta composed this verse primarily for the *Parātrīśikā*?

anuttara-amṛta-kulam : here we have again the central concepts of Trika and Kula — *anuttara*, although appearing as an adjective (in this compound) of *hṛdaya*, is the foremost theme of the *Parātrīśikā Vivaraṇa*, and it occurs in the three *maṅgala* verses in three different meanings.

This compound qualifying *hṛdaya* can be translated as: the totality (*kulam*) of the immortal nectar (*amṛta*) of the Absolute (*anuttara*).

If *kula* is taken to mean body, then the heart would be qualified by "a body born of the nectar of the Absolute."

mama : "mine" — not as the individual heart of the author, but "belonging to the universal I" (see Sanderson's comment).

saṁsphuratāt : may it flourish, shine, unfold, manifest.

The prefix *saṁ* is significant, because it relates to the two (*yāmala*), the Mother or Śakti, and the Father or Śiva, whose coming together in creativity brings about the desired enlightenment and/or creation.

Jayaratha, in his commentary on the *Tantrāloka* gives three distinct meanings of this verse (on *TĀ* I.1): one according to Trika, the second according to Krama, and the third related to the birth of the author from the union of his parents, Vimalā and Narasiṁhagupta, his own name occurring in the first line in its double meaning: Abhinava. Sanderson disagrees with Jayaratha, and he maintains that the verse basically contains only one statement, with one explicit and another implicit meaning.[8] "The principal meaning is an invocation of that reality embodied in the fusion of Bhairava and the goddess" (p. 139). The prime intention of the verse is a "prayer for enlightenment" (Sanderson, p. 90): "May my heart expand as the totality of the bliss of the Absolute" (another translation of *hṛdayam anuttarāmṛtakulam mama saṁsphuratāt*).

"In accomplishing this preparative function it also encapsulates the teaching that is to follow. For the fusion of the deities that it invokes is the Trika's ultimate reality; and it characterises this fusion in terms that provide a brief but potent definition of that ultimate, namely, that it is, as we shall see, the undifferentiated essence of consciousness containing all reality, both inner and outer, in a state of absolute potential. Indeed, it is precisely because the fusion of the deities is this ultimate that the verse could be believed to have the desired effect. For it expresses our author's immersing himself in his true identity and thereby achieving for a moment the state of enlightenment which alone can inspire and sustain a work that will expound the nature of that state and the means by which it may be realised. For the more sublime that goal of a pious endeavour the greater the resistance of the hindering powers; and when that goal is to bestow enlightenment

8. In *Sāmarasya*, p. 136.

through the recognition of ultimate reality, nothing less than the impression left by the direct experience of that reality can protect against distraction by the contrary impulses that will obscure it in the course of the conceptualisation into which the author must descend for the benefit of his readers." (Sanderson, p. 90).

"My heart" (*mama hṛdayam*) could be understood as an individual prayer of the author, but Jayaratha (in his commentary on the same verse) immediately identifies it with *ātman*, i.e. the self and heart of all beings. "Benedictory verses are always altruistic in intention," and the "my" has to be understood in an inclusive sense (cf. Sanderson, p. 92). "My heart," then, is not Abhinavagupta's heart as opposed to that of others who are yet to be enlightened but rather the core of his being which is the core of all beings. Or we may say that "my heart," *mama hṛdayam*, is intended to mean "the heart of the 'I'," that is the innermost awareness that animates all manifestation. . . . (Therefore it would mean) "May my heart shine forth in its fullness (for us all)." For within Abhinavagupta's Śaivism "we" can only mean the plurality of "'I's projected by and in the one 'I'." (Sanderson, p. 93).

The second reference to the biographical meaning of Abhinavagupta's birth from the union of his parents has to be seen in the context of the Kaula ritual. His parents fulfilled the condition of Kaula union "being that both should be immersed in awareness of themselves as Śiva and his consort (Śakti)" (Sanderson, p. 99). The child born from such a union is called *yoginībhū*, "born from a *yoginī*," which applies to Abhinavagupta, and "the body of one conceived in such a union is the receptacle of enlightenment even before birth" (ibid., p. 100). It is this identity of the author which makes him eminently qualified for composing a text which aims at enlightening others, his disciples and readers.

Another analysis of the first *maṅgala* is possible and meaningful as well in relation to the *Parātrīśikā*: The first line (*pāda*) describes the Mother, and it contains the adjective *abhinava*. The second line relates to the Father and contains the word *-gupta*. It is in the third line that the union of both occurs, and *ubhaya* may also refer to the combination of *abhinava* and *gupta*, thus the word-play establishes the name of the author, even though this is not his primary concern. If *abhinava* is related to the Mother, She is the *Parāśakti* who constantly manifests and gives birth to the creation (*sṛṣṭi*), and *gupta* is the Father, i.e. Bhairava, because he is engaged in *saṁhāra* (absorption, dissolution) and in hiding his self (*tirodhāna*). This is again expressed in

Abhinavagupta's exegesis of the *sūtra*: *etad guhyaṁ mahāguhyam* (v. 2), which he analyses as "this secret (mystery), this great non-secret," where the first refers to Bhairava, the second to the manifested Śakti.

The third line contains the word with which the Tantra ends: *yāmalam*: *ityetad rudrayāmalam* (v. 37), "this (i.e. the whole revelation of the Tantra) is the union of Rudra and Rudrā." This pair or union is also hinted at by the term *visarga* (*mayam*) in the third line, implying the two dots representing Śiva and Śakti.

Spiritually or from the point of view of *yoga*, the Heart can only flourish or be illumined if that union (*yāmala*) takes place in the very body (*kulam*) of the author or *yogī*: the two energies *prāṇa* and *apāna* entering the middle path (*madhyanāḍī*) and becoming one.

Verse 2

yasyāṁ antarviśvam etad vibhāti
bāhyābhāsaṁ bhāsamānaṁ visṛṣṭau |
kṣobhe kṣīṇe 'nuttarāyāṁ sthitau tāṁ
vande devīṁ svātmasaṁvittim ekām || 2 ||

I bow to that One Goddess in the form of Self-consciousness,
in whom this universe that appears as an external objective existence
in the state of manifestation, shines,
on the disappearance of agitation,
in the state of the Unsurpassable Reality.

If the first verse was a prayer for enlightenment, the second and third express adoration, homage (*namaskāra*), to the Goddess — not a Deity distanced from one's self, but, in the spirit of Advaita, She who is the very Self-consciousness. She is both, containing the entire external manifestation in Herself (*bāhyābhāsa*) as well as the innermost Consciousness (*svātmasaṁvitti*). The stress put on to *ekā* clearly indicates the tradition of *Anuttara Trika*, worshipping the One Goddess, *Parā*. This is not only an expression of veneration, but Abhinavagupta immediately clarifies also the condition which makes it possible for everyone to enter the state of the Unsurpassable, Absolute Reality: as soon as the agitation or confusion ceases (*kṣobhe kṣīṇe*). This reminds one of the frequently quoted verse of the *Spanda Kārikā*:

yadā kṣobhaḥ pralīyeta tadā syāt paramaṁ padam,

When the agitation disappears, the highest state appears.
— *SpKĀ* I.9

The root *bhā* occurs thrice, and *ābhāsa* in Trika has no association with the idea of illusory appearance, it is rather the entire manifestation which shines within the Supreme Consciousness Herself.

The word *anuttara* occurs in all the three opening verses, and it hints at the content of the Tantra (hence *vastunirdeśa*), but in this verse it qualifies *sthiti*: not a concept but a state of being. The aim of the text is not an intellectual understanding of *anuttara* (which is anyhow impossible, as Abhinavagupta's commentary on the word with 16 meanings will show), it is to arrive at a state "which has nothing beyond it." And this happens, following the *Spanda Kārikā* and the present verse, the moment agitation, confusion ceases. The purpose of a spiritual text consists also in removing that mental agitation causing an obstacle to insight.

Verse 3

naraśaktiśivātmakaṁ trikaṁ
hṛdaye yā vinidhāya bhāsayet |
praṇamāmi parām anuttarām
nijabhāsāṁ pratibhācamatkṛtim || 3 ||

Homage to the Supreme Goddess Absolute,
the wonder of intuitive insight,
self-radiant,
manifesting Herself
and holding in Her Heart
the trinity: Man, Energy and Śiva.

This one verse contains the entire Trika philosophy in a nutshell, and at the same time it establishes the intimate relationship that exists in this system between the aesthetic and the mystical dimensions of experience. The language is simple, as compared to the first *maṅgala* verse, but here every word is loaded with deep meaning. Here, too, as in the previous verse, the root *bhā* occurs three times, closely linking the two verses. The "object" of veneration is here again the feminine Absolute: *parām anuttarām*, "the supreme, unsurpassable (Goddess)." In the Trika

triad she is the central of the three goddesses, above *Parāparā* and *Aparā*, but in the *Parā Trika* tradition to which the *Parātrīśikā* belongs, she alone is worshipped, having assumed in herself the lower aspects, as well as the entire Trika triad: *Nara-Śakti-Śiva*. This is an extraordinary statement which needs to be explained. A parallel passage from the *Tantrāloka* throws light on this:

> The ability of the Lord to embody himself as the universe without drawing on anything outside (his own nature) is the supreme Goddess that (our masters) call "creativity" (*pratibhām*), "the feminine ultimate" (*anuttarām*). It is the supreme power of universality (*kaulikī śakti*). . . .
> — *TĀ* III.66-69

Jayaratha in his commentary explains *anuttarām* as "She who is full of the wonder of excessive freedom and sovereignty" (*niratiśayaiśvarya-camatkāramayīm*, p. 426).

As Abhinavagupta says pointedly, she not only has a heart, but she *is* the Heart. Now, the Heart, *hṛdaya*, is a central concept in the entire *Parātrīśikā* and *Vivaraṇa*.[9] A classical definition given by Kṣemarāja (in his commentary on the *Śivasūtras*, I.15) runs as follows: "The heart is the light of Consciousness because/in so far as it is the foundation of the entire universe."[10] I have to reserve a "hermeneutics of the heart" for later.

Her identification with *pratibhā* and *camatkṛti* reveals again the experiential aspect of this feminine Absolute, because wonder or surprise is not a static quality, but it is her nature as ever fresh and overwhelming experience. The *Śivasūtras* contain the Sūtra: *vismayo yogabhūmikāḥ*, "The stages of Yoga are full of wonder" (I.12). *Camatkāra* and *vismaya* are closely related, although the second is more often found in the context of spiritual experience. Relating these two terms (*pratibhā* and *camatkāra*) to the aesthetic or *rasa*-experience is not difficult, since the source of both, the aesthetic and the mystical, is the same Śakti, who not only brings about inspiration in the poet and the mystic alike, but who Herself is that power of creativity.

Leaving aside any further interpretation of the third verse, we will briefly look

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9. Cf. Paul Muller-Ortega, *The Triadic Heart of Śiva*, Albany, SUNY Press, 1989 (based, as said before, on the *Laghuvṛtti*).

10. *viśvapratiṣṭhāsthānatvāt citprakāśo hṛdayam*. — *Śivasūtra Vimarśinī* I.15.

at the remaining two verses. Coming down from the level of the Absolute to the human level (Nara of the Trika), the author pays his homage to his *gurus*.

Verse 4

jayatyanarghamahimā vipāśitapaśuvrajaḥ ।
śrīmānādyaguruḥ śambhuḥ śrīkaṇṭhaḥ parameśvaraḥ ॥ 4 ॥

> Hail to the primordial *guru* Śambhu, Śrīkaṇṭha, Parameśvara, of incomparable greatness, who cleaves asunder the bondage of the multitude of bound souls.

This verse establishes the link with the tradition and the line of teachers, starting from Śiva, the original *guru*, who manifested himself as Śrīkaṇṭha at the beginning of the *sampradāya*, and then praising his own masters in this line of Trika and Kula: Śambhunātha and Parameśvara (Maheśvara). Both, Sanderson and Gnoli, take *Śambhu* here only in the sense of Śiva, but Jaideva Singh discovers a double meaning, referring to Śiva as well as to his *guru* Śambhunātha. The singular *jayati* seems to support Sanderson's and Gnoli's translations, but the implicit suggestion may not be advisedly ignored.

The question now is: who was or who were the *gurus* of Abhinavagupta in this tradition? Sanderson shows that he pays his obeisance in each of his works to the *gurus* from whom he has learnt the respective text or tradition.[11] He has also shown that Parameśvara and Maheśvara are the same, but again with the double meaning of Śiva and the *guru*, in the case of the Anuttara Trika.[12] But since the Tantra also propounds Kula, and that the *kaulikasiddhi* and *kaulikī Śakti* are of central importance, it would be surprising if he made no reference to his most venerated *guru* Śambhunātha, his master in Kula, to whom he is indebted for his enlightenment and his understanding of the intricacies of the Kula texts. At the beginning of the *Tantrāloka* he pays obeisance to him in these words:

> Glorious is the one Śambhunātha, together with his companion Bhagavatī, who is able to draw us out from this world. The path of

11. In *Sāmarasya*, pp. 123 ff.

12. See his arguments in *Sāmarasya*, p. 123, note 85.

the Śāstras (scriptures) which is deep (and difficult) has been clarified to me by the rays of the teaching of Śambhu(nātha). — *TĀ* I.13

Here, too, Śambhu stands for Śambhunātha, hence it would not be difficult to see the name of the *guru* in the *maṅgala* verse above. A similar ambiguity or double meaning occurs at the end of the concluding verses of the *Vivaraṇa*:

parameśvaraḥ prapannoddharaṇakṛpāprayuktaguruhṛdayaḥ ।
śrīmāndevaḥ śambhurmāmiyati niyuktavāṁstattve ॥
— v. 17, p. 105

The Lord has set in motion the heart of the *guru* with compassion for lifting up those who have taken refuge (at his feet). That glorious *guru* Śambhu(nātha) has set me on the path of truth.

Jaideva Singh has omitted *Śambhu* in his translation, which gives the clue to Śambhunātha, while Gurtoo has understood it in this sense.[13] The author cannot have possibly meant Somānanda in this context, and who is mentioned in the following verse, since he was not his direct *guru*, and our author acknowledges him mainly as the author of the commentary (*Vivṛti*).

We cannot go here into the five types of relationships (*sambandha*) between masters and disciples, from the Divine to the human.[14]

Coming down from the Divine to the human *guru* and to himself, passing on this tradition to his disciples, Abhinavagupta states clearly the purpose of composing this commentary in the fifth introductory verse.

Verse 5

nijaśiṣyavibodhāya prabuddhasmaraṇāya ca ।
mayābhinavaguptena śramo 'yaṁ kriyate manāk ॥ 5 ॥

For enlightening my own disciples and for reminding those already enlightened,

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13. N.K. Gurtoo, *Śrī Śrī Parātrīśikā*, p. 447.

14. Cf. Bettina Bäumer, "*Vāc* as *saṁvāda*: Dialogue in the context of Advaita Śaivāgamas", in C. Conio (ed.), *La Parola Creatrice in India e nel Medio Oriente*, Pisa (Giardini), 1991, pp. 79-89.

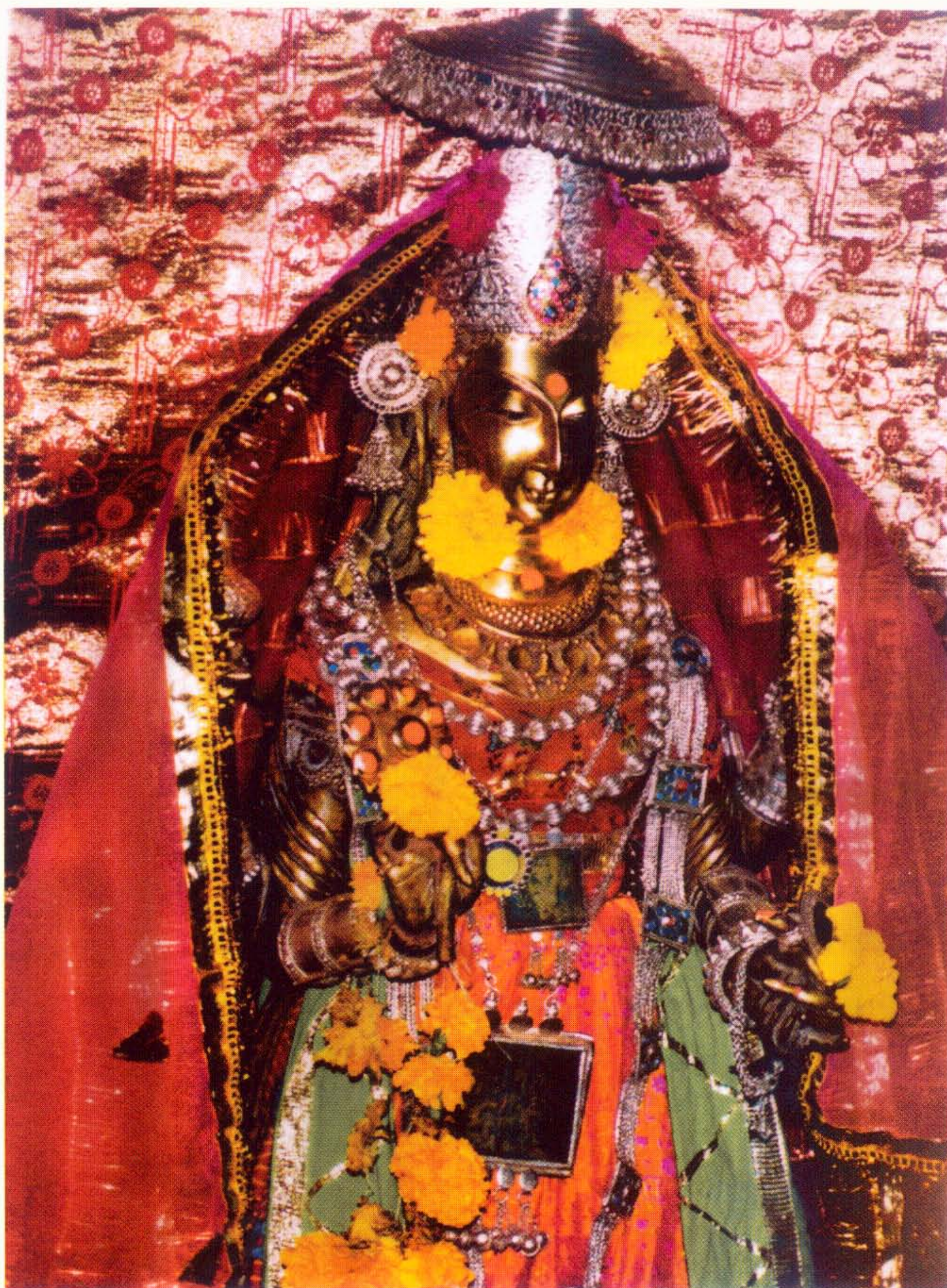
> I, Abhinavagupta, am making a little exertion (in writing this commentary).[15]

The purpose of this commentary is enlightenment of his disciples and readers. According to the *Spanda Kārikā*, there are three grades of enlightenment: *aprabuddha* (unenlightened), *prabuddha* (enlightened), and *suprabuddha*, (perfectly enlightened) (cf. *Spanda Kārikā* I.17 and Kṣemarāja's commentary). The difference between the two latter stages is explained by Kṣemarāja that the partially enlightened one has the awareness of his real identity with Śiva only at the beginning and end of each state, whereas the fully enlightened one "is completely free from even the residual traces of unenlightenment . . . (and he is one) whose inner nature always shines as identical with Śiva" (ibid., tr. J. Singh, p. 87). This explains that even the (partially) enlightened one needs to be reminded of his true state by studying the scriptures (*sadāgama*), instruction from a true master (*sadguru*), and true reflection (*sattarka*). In the verse under discussion, Abhinavagupta is this *sadguru* who explains the Āgama. In the concluding verses of the *Vivaraṇa* he becomes even more personal, and he gives the names and qualities of his disciples who urged him to write this commentary: he specially mentions Karṇa, then his own brother Manoratha Gupta, and Rāmadeva.[16] This verse at the same time makes it clear that the following text is only for advanced disciples/readers.

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15. *Manāk*: a little, to a certain extent, could also mean (as understood by Gnoli) "even if it is not perfect."

16. See Introduction and Conclusion I.



Śakti Devī, Chatrari, Chamba (Himachal Pradesh), dated 700 CE.

2

The Supreme Dialogue

THE fact that the Āgama — any Āgama — is revealed in the form of a dialogue, mostly between the Devī and Śiva/Bhairava, becomes a starting point for Abhinavagupta to develop a whole theory and theology of dialogue, at all levels. If the Śruti is *apauruṣeya*, without an author, the Āgama has not only a divine Author, but it is also revealed in a dialogical form of question-answer, implying a relationship (*sambandha*). This reflects, before any non-dualistic interpretation, the insight into language as dialogue, as relationship — at the divine as well as human level.[1]

Therefore Abhinavagupta's hermeneutic starts from the apparently straightforward introduction to the Tantra:

> *śrīdevī uvāca*
> The glorious Goddess said.[2]

He subjects these two words to a thorough analysis. In his summary verses before the answer of Bhairava he calls Devī: "question" (*praśna*): *ityucyate devī yanmayapraśnakāriṇī* (p. 22). She asks about the nature of the Supreme power who she is Herself. She not only utters a question soliciting the answer by Bhairava, she herself is the question initiating the dialogue.

> Now the enquiry about the nature of *parāśakti* who expands in the form of the universe is said to be *praśna* or question. The Devī who is that very Śakti is the initiator of the question about Her (i.e. *parāśakti*).
>
> The consideration of the nature of this expansion is said to be the

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1. Cf. B. Bäumer, "*Vāc* as *Saṁvāda*", *Dialogue in the context of Advaita Śaivāgamas.*
2. Cf. R. Torella, "*Devī uvāca* or the Theology of the Perfect Tense", in *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 1999, 16, pp. 129-38.

> most excellent organ of speech (*para-vaktra*) and that consists of both question and answer. — p. 63

Abhinavagupta provides a semantic analysis of *Devī* (*nirvacana*), giving seven meanings derived from the root *div*:

> Hence "divinity" (*devatā*) applies especially to Bhagavān Bhairava. Devī is (reasonably) applied to Bhagavatī also, for she is His very Śakti. This interpretation of *Devī* is supported by the Science of Grammar which declares that the root "*div*" is used in the sense of "sport, the desire to overcome or surpass all, behaviour, irradiation, adoration, and movement." — p. 11

The Devī, meant here, is *Parā*, the Supreme Goddess in the Anuttara Trika, who is at the same time *Parā Vāk*, the transcendent Word. So the first question for the commentator is: Who is She who asks the question? followed by the discussion on the relationship in and through which the Tantra is revealed.

It is significant that Abhinavagupta defines the *Devī* at the beginning in the context of the five acts of Śiva: *sṛṣṭi, sthiti, saṁhāra, tirodhāna* and *anugraha* (emission, maintenance, absorption, concealing, and grace). The final purpose of all five acts is the last one: Grace, and (although *anugraha* is not grammatically feminine) it is Śakti who herself is grace, and who is inseparable from Śiva. Since we move in the realm of Trika or triad, the third element immediately comes in, though not named as such (Nara). But since Śakti is "full of the thought of bestowing grace on the world" (*lokānugrahavimarśamayī*, p. 2), the Nara aspect of Trika is dynamically comprehended as *loka*. Though all the five acts are an expression of the dynamism of the Divine, they aim at the last act, that of grace. This statement on the dynamic Trika is prominently placed at the beginning of the *Vivaraṇa*, because the final purpose of the revelation is directed at bestowing grace, i.e. liberation, to the world.

Abhinavagupta then immediately places the entire revelation in the form of the supreme dialogue in the scheme of the four levels of the Word: *Vāc*. Because *what* is revealed is the highest, transcendent Word, that at the same time is one with the Supreme Goddess of Trika: *Parā*. But it is only in a descent from her supreme level that revelation can take place. In her primordial stage She is non-differentiated and is rooted in the pure Consciousness consisting in the highest

mantra (i.e. *aham*), altogether free from any limitations of space and time (*prathamataraṁ paramahāmantramayyām adeśakālakalitāyāṁ saṁvidi nirūḍhā*, p. 2, l.9). At this stage she abides without differentiation of question and answer.

Then he unfolds the stages of descent of the highest Word into *paśyantī* (the Visionary), *madhyamā* (the Intermediary, Mental), down to *vaikharī* (the Expressed), and this scheme remains at the back of the entire *Vivaraṇa* and gives it philosophical, theological and linguistic coherence. The *Parātrīśikā Vivaraṇa* is one of the most systematic texts of Abhinavagupta on the stages of *vāc*, reaching from the cosmological, theological, linguistic to the psychological or phenomenological fields. Therefore he not only makes a philosophical statement at the beginning of the commentary, but he demonstrates it with examples from experiential data such as memory which arises at the stage of *paśyantī*, prior to any distinction of word and referent. It is at the stage of *madhyamā* where an inner, i.e. mental distinction occurs between the word and its referent (*vācya vācakayoḥ bhedamāmarśya*), and at the stage of *vaikharī*, the expressed, this distinction becomes externalised. His reference to experience is important, because it is experience that alone can ascend from below and arise to reach the higher stages or modes of being:

> When this regular, fixed relation of the word and its referent (*vyavasthāyāṁ*) is proved in one's own experience, it will be found that what is the stage of *parā vāc* is the power of non-*māyīya* word and is of the nature of the highest truth. It is unconventional (*asāṁketika*), natural (*akṛtaka*), having as its essence the stamp of the highest truth, and is inspired by the truth of the energy of the *mantra* of I-consciousness, the principle of which will be described in the sequels. — pp. 8-9

He hastens to add that Parā is present and pervades all the other levels:

> ". . . beginning with *paśyantī* which is the initial creative state of the energy of the highest *mantra*, up to *vaikharī* in which manifestation of difference of all the existents has proceeded fully, this *parāvāk*, full of the wondrous delight of her own self, resting within her own self which is all Light, continues pulsating (*sphurati*). That pulsation is I-consciousness whose highest truth is uninterrupted continuity. — p. 9

Therefore, Supreme Consciousness even while appearing as *paśyantī*

> and *madhyamā* actually experiences herself as the Supreme Consciousness. It is this Supreme Consciousness (*parā saṁvid*) that is said to be "Devī" (Goddess). — ibid.

Once the Devī has been identified with *parā saṁvid*, the further questions arise: First of all, how is She ignorant of her own nature and has to ask Bhairava about her own identity? And the second point is a grammatical one which has far-reaching consequences in an Advaitic theology: how come that the perfect tense *uvāca* is used for the Devī who is Consciousness herself, hence ever-present, and how can this Goddess-Consciousness be referred to as a third person?

R. Torella, in his article "*Devī uvāca*, or the Theology of the Perfect Tense,"[3] has analysed this question first from the grammatical, then from the philosophical-theological point of view.

I feel inclined to summarise his argument: According to Sanskrit grammar, the perfect tense refers to the past, to something remote from the "today" (*anadyatana*), and to an action removed from direct experience (*parokṣa*). How can these features be applied to the Goddess-Consciousness and to a revelation which is ever present?

Abhinavagupta relates this pastness to a descent of the Devī from her transcendent level as *parāvāk* to the levels of the Word where alone revelation can take place:

> When the glorious *parāvāk* becoming *paśyantī* and *madhyamā* (i.e. in the stage of *paśyantī* and *madhyamā*) thus recollects herself, "I myself as Parāvāk Devī said thus," then (i.e. that state of recollection), shining forth (*ullasat*) in that form (i.e. as *parāvāk*), she regards her own *parā* stage as past in accordance with the fact of difference brought about by *māyā*, because in comparison to herself that stage (of *paśyantī*) is the commencement of *māyā*, and because of her travelling through the passage of inner senses (in the case of *madhyamā*) and outer senses (in the case of *vaikharī*), whose life consists in manifesting difference, she regards the *parā* stage as past (*parokṣatayā*). — pp. 11-12

Then Abhinavagupta goes into the question of "today" — which day is meant when the perfect takes place "not today"? He goes into the relativity of time, since

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3. *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 27, 1999, pp. 129-38.

a day of Brahmā is incommensurable with a human day, etc. "Thus, how can the concept of 'today' or the present which is unsettled and fictitious apply to unfictitious consciousness (which is beyond time)?" (p. 12).

In the *Vijñāna Bhairava* the word *adya*, today, is related to the Goddess on two occasions: at the beginning of the Tantra, when she asks Bhairava about her own nature, and she states that even after having "heard" or studied the Tantras, even today she is not satisfied. And the same *adya* occurs at the very end, when she has received the revelation and the practical instructions from Bhairava, and she finds her fulfilment and complete satisfaction (v. 162). Both "times" are out of time, and hence "today" is the only appropriate "time" for the Goddess-Consciousness.

The pastness which Abhinavagupta relates to the descent of the Word from her primal state as Parā is compared to a psychological phenomenon, that a person speaks in sleep without knowing, and on waking up has a faint recollection and utters something like: "In an insane condition or in the condition of being asleep, I, so they say, uttered moaning sound" (p. 12). Such an expression also reveals a state of astonishment (*camatkāra*). But he immediately differentiates this expression relating to a past experience in the present from the state of *parā*, in which "there is total absence of any object whatsoever" (p. 12). What this comparison seeks to point out is a faint recollection of *paśyantī* and *madhyamā* of their *parā* stage, which is "past" only in the sense of being almost forgotten in the course of descent, although *parā* is ever present also in the three other stages (just as the subject of the dream state and the waking state is the same). R. Torella states the argument thus:

> The term *parokṣa* is explained twice and with two different meanings, always with reference to *parā*. The first time it refers to her being inaccessible to an objectifying knowledge; the second time it points to the general absence of the very notion of "knowable object" on the *parā* level, thus making the question of *parokṣa/pratyakṣa* meaningless.
>
> Abhinavagupta does not say it explicitly but he seems to expect the recipient of his teaching to realise by himself that all this argument is essentially only a variation on the theme of recognition, evoked through the solution of a grammatical problem. Just as the first person of the perfect presupposes, so-to-speak, a splitting of the

> subject followed by a new integration and reconstitution of the original unity, so the Goddess starts from the state of *paśyantī-madhyamā* and finally re-affirms herself as the all-encompassing *parā*, or, in other words, as the questioner (Devī) and ends as the answerer (Bhairava).[4]

But the second problem in the context of Advaita is the third person of *Devī uvāca*. Abhinavagupta again appeals to the grammatical rule that *uvāca* can as well be applied to the first person: "I said." Hence the meaning changes to "I, who am the Goddess, said," avoiding the third person objectivity related to Nara.[5]

> In so doing, Abhinavagupta aims to avail himself of the observations that the grammatical tradition, from Kātyāyana onwards, has elaborated on the issue of the first person of the perfect. Such a kind of sophisticated operation — to translate grammatical paradigms into theological ones, and vice versa — is not new to him. He moves with elegance and suppleness between two factually different dimensions, nourishing one through the other, thus pointing, through the liberty of his exegesis, to the unpredictability of the paths of supreme Consciousness.
>
> — Torella, *Devī uvāca,* p. 132

Abhinavagupta then sums up the two restored meanings of pastness and first person:

> According to this principle, *parāvāk* who fulfils the sense of the past in all its aspects, viz. *sāmānya bhūta (luṅ,* i.e. aorist), *anadyatana* (*laṅ,* i.e. imperfect) and *parokṣa* (*liṭ,* i.e. past perfect) reflects thus in the first person of the *parokṣa* (past): "I the self-same Parāvāk Devī unseparated from Śiva (*vācya*) and the Śāstra (*vācaka*) or from the word and its referent thus said." This is the sense of the use of the past tense.
>
> — tr., p. 12

If it is the same "I" who asks the question and who answers in the form of Bhairava, does the author not land in a monistic tautology? Must there not be a subtle difference between the questioner and the answerer? What is the dynamism

4. R. Torella, *Devī uvāca*, p. 134.

5. See chapter five.

implied, apart from the already mentioned descent of the Devī from her *parā* state to the levels of *paśyantī*, etc.?

Torella has rightly related the difference of the two levels to the "dynamics of the recognition of one's own identity with the Lord," *pratyabhijñā*.

> The perfect tense in the first person is therefore the ideal model to express a distinction and a coincidence of planes at the same time, that is, the empirical subject's existing and acting in ordinary reality and, at the same time, his being eternally rooted in supreme Consciousness.
> — *Devī uvāca*, p. 134

The whole situation of dialogue between Devī and Bhairava is related to the degrees of *guru-śiṣya* relationship in the revelation of the Āgamas, since the Goddess assumes the role of disciple out of her nature of grace.

Guru-śiṣya Sambandha

Abhinavagupta quotes the classical verse from the *Svacchanda Tantra* in this context:

> *guruśiṣyapade sthitvā svayaṁ deva sadāśivaḥ* ।
> *pūrvottara padairvākyaistantraṁ samavatārayat* ॥
> — VIII. 31

> The God Sadāśiva himself assuming the position of both teacher and disciple revealed the Tantra by means of former and latter sentences, i.e. by means of question and answer.[6]

Kṣemarāja, while commenting on this passage, explains "God" (*deva*) as

> Lord Śiva who possesses the power of the Supreme Word (*paravāk-śaktimayaḥ*), who, as Sadāśiva, assumes the respective level (*bhūmikā*) of questioner and answerer. "The position of teacher and disciple" is explained by the phrase: "in the realm of creative insight" (*pratibhābhuvi*).

Abhinavagupta has given an interesting paraphrase of the *Svacchanda* verse in his *Tantrāloka*: "Consciousness itself," he says, "thus becomes question and answer, in the position of master and disciple. The difference in their bodies is

6. Cf. B. Bäumer, *Vāc* as *Saṁvāda*, pp. 79-89.

insubstantial."[7] And Jayaratha comments:

> Is not the difference between master and disciple a matter of direct perception? Where is the place for the nature (and unity) of consciousness? (He answers to this objection). This (difference) is insubstantial or unreal. For consciousness, out of the immensity of its own freedom, makes these different bodies to appear within itself. — on *TĀ* I.256

In the course of the revelation and descent of the scriptures there are different kinds of relationships (*sambandha*), in a descent from the divine to the level of human masters and disciples.[8]

The *Svacchanda Tantra* refers to the relationship of Sadāśiva and Īśvara, as *guru* and disciple at the divine level, where Sadāśiva represents the aspect of knowledge (*jñāna*), and Īśvara, the aspect of activity (*kriyā*). This corresponds to the "great relationship" (*mahān sambandha*).

In the *Parātrīśikā* Abhinavagupta finds the supreme relationship of Devī and Bhairava because it is at the level of dynamic non-duality.

> *antarbhāvitaniḥśeṣaprasaraṁ bhairavaṁ vapuḥ* ।
> *prativaktṛsvarūpeṇa sarvadaiva vijṛmbhate* ॥
>
> *etau prasarasaṁhārāvakālakalitau yataṁ* ।
> *tadekarūpamevedaṁ tattvaṁ praśnottarātmakam* ॥
>
> *tadevaṁ parasambandhamanuttaratayānvitam* ।
> *ṣaḍardhasārasarvasvaṁ guravaḥ prāṅnyarūpayan* ॥[9]
>
> In Bhairava the magnitude of the expansion of the universe is inwardly enfolded, and He abides as the eternal responder. Since the dual process of expansion and retraction occurs in timelessness, hence this question-answer is the truth of uniform nature.
> This is the supreme relationship, associated with *anuttara*.
> My revered *guru* (Śambhunātha) has already expounded it as the entire essence of Trika Śāstra.[10]

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7. *TĀ* I.256.

8. Cf. *TĀ* I.273-75.

9. Summary verses, ll.18-23, p. 22.

10. Cf. Jaideva Singh's translation, p. 64.

He again refers to the ultimate meaning of "question" in the context of the Advaitic dialogue:

> The divine Supreme Consciousness-Power not different from Bhairava on the point of expansion according to Her essential nature, is said to be supreme *icchāśakti* (voluntary power). Her actual expansion as *jñānaśakti* (cognitive power) assumes the *parāparā* or *paśyantī* form and as *kriyāśakti* (conative power) the *aparā* or *madhyamā* form, etc.
>
> Now, the inquiry about the nature of *parāśakti* who expands in the form of the universe is said to be *praśna* or question. The Devī who is that very Śakti is the initiator of the question about her (i.e. *parāśakti*).
>
> The consideration of the nature of this expansion is said to be the most excellent organ of speech (*para-vaktra*) and that consists of both question and answer. — p. 63[11]

Thus the questions related to *Devī uvāca* in the context of Advaita have been resolved by Abhinavagupta at various levels — grammatical and theological-spiritual, since the entire Tantra following the question of the Devī has only one purpose: *jīvanmukti* or liberation-in-life, and it is in the interface and dynamism of the supreme relationship of Devī and Bhairava, or of question-answer at the ultimate level, that the human disciple can discover his or her own identity.

Once it is established that Devī in the first person asked the question, "therefore there is the actual experience of the energy of the highest *mantra* of the I-consciousness of the Divine in *jñānaśakti*" (p. 14).

The entire passage shows that, although there is ultimately only one (Divine) Subject, it still permits relationship, which is the supreme relationship between the power of grace (*anugrahaśakti*) and the power of creativity (*visarga*, on the side of Śiva).

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11. *parā bhagavatī saṁvitprasarantī svarūpataḥ* ।
parecchāśaktirityuktā bhairavasyāvibhedinī ॥

tasyāḥ prasaradharmitvaṁ jñānaśaktyādirūpatā ।
parāparāparārūpapaśyantyādi vapurbhṛtiḥ ॥

tadevaṁ prasarākārasvarūpaparimarśanam ।
praśna ityucyate devī yanmaya praśnakāriṇī ॥ — p. 22, ll.7-12.

> This is that imperceptible face (i.e. Śakti) of Bhairava full of the feel of manifestation, the essence of which is the unsurpassable I-consciousness, full of the stirring joy (*kṣobha*) issuing from the union (*saṁghaṭṭa*) with Śiva who is symbolised by *a*, and Śakti who is symbolised by *ā*, which is the source of the appearance and extension of manifestation according to the Trika system of philosophy and Yoga, and which is the original (*maulikaṁ*), ever abiding state (*dhruvapadam*) and the life of all living beings. Therefore, it is not proper to associate the Divine with a particular station, etc., for in the absence of any limitation in His case, designating a particular place for Him is entirely unjustifiable (p. 15, tr. modified).

Before moving on to the second section (starting from verse 5 of the Tantra) Abhinavagupta gives a kind of summary of the question and relates it to Trika. The question of the Devī in one and a half verses starting with *anuttaram* relates to Śiva. The second part of her question (v. 2) starting with: *hṛdayasthā tu yā śaktiḥ* relates to Śakti. Then the question arises about the third element of Trika, Nara (*atra yadi eṣā trikārthābhiprāyeṇa vyākhyā tat naraviṣayapraśnaprasaṇgaḥ*, p. 32). This seems to be an introduction to the second part: *pratibimba* or *uttara*, which comprehends every aspect of Nara. But the alternative is that the two questions concern *Yāmala*, i.e. "Śiva and Śakti whose connection is known as *yāmala*, so that a separate question about each could be justified." (p. 82). This question will be taken up again in the context of the grammatical persons (chapter five).

3

Anuttara
The Unsurpassable and Its Meanings

THE sixteen interpretations of *Anuttara* are, maybe, one of the most extraordinary examples of exegetical ingenuity of the Sanskrit textual tradition.[1] What Abhinavagupta seeks to exclude is any one-sided understanding of the Absolute, since that would be a contradiction of the very term. In terms of theology we may call this attempt *apophatism*, i.e. the Divine Reality can only be described in negative terms, because any positive (*kataphatic*) statement would limit it to our understanding. But even the apophatic dimension is only one side of the total reality of the Absolute.

At the outset, before going into Abhinavagupta's detailed analysis, two

1. A. Sanderson, in: *Sāmarasya*, note 123 : "Perhaps the most striking example of this is the exegesis of the *Parātrīśikā* in Abhinavagupta's *PTV* (especially p. 193, l. 1–p. 197, l. 7 [*KED*, pp. 19-32]) giving sixteen semantic analyses of the word *anuttaram*, and p. 262, l. 16–p. 269, l. 11 (*KED*, pp. 223-42), giving nine interpretations of v. 9 and sixteen meanings to the words *tṛtīyaṁ brahma* in that verse. By the disciplines of text-analysis I mean grammatical analysis (*vyutpattiḥ*) and semantic analysis (*nirvacanam*). Both provide the exegete with considerable room for manoeuvre. He needs to show only that the meaning he attributes to a sentence does not infringe the rules of grammar. It is not necessary to consider how far the expression of that meaning through those words conforms to normal usage, word-order and the like. It is enough that the meaning is not grammatically impossible. Semantic analysis is even more flexible. It enables an exegete to insert the meaning he seeks by deriving a word artificially from the meaning of verbal roots that resemble the sounds or syllables that compose it (*akṣaravarṇasāmānyāt*); see Kahrs 1998, p. 37, quoting *Yāska*: *akṣaravarṇasāmānyān nirbrūyāt* "One may analyse on the basis of similarities of syllables or sounds." Abhinavagupta echoes these words in *PTV*, p. 268, ll. 23-24 (*KED*, p. 241): *tathā ca vedavyākaraṇe pārameśvareṣu *ca śāstreṣu* (conj.: *śāśtreṣu* Gnoli, *KED*) *mantradīkṣādiśabdeṣv akṣaravarṇasāmyān nirvacanam upapannam* "In the explanation of the Veda and in [explaining] such words as *mantraḥ* and *dīkṣā* in the Śaiva scriptures it is proper to analyse meaning on the basis of similarity of sounds or syllables."

grammatical features have to be retained: (a) *Anuttara* is a negative term coined with the *a(an) privativum*; (b) what is negated is in the comparative form, *tara*.[2] In an important article Jan Gonda has examined the question "Why are *ahiṁsā* and similar concepts often expressed in a negative form?"[3] The principle he applies to mostly Vedic concepts is also relevant in the case of *Anuttara*, besides other concepts in Trika formed with *a privativum*, such as: *anargala, avikalpa (=nirvikalpa), anapekṣa, anākhya* (inexpressible, unspeakable), *akalpita* (not made, hence spontaneous), besides the central *advaita/advaya, abheda*.

Another term for the Absolute which will engage us later in the context of *kula/kaula* is *akula* (free from or beyond the totality or the universe). Apart from Gonda's arguments, one finds that in India the most important values or concepts are more often expressed in negative terms, mostly by *a privativum* or *nir. Anuttara* is such a paradigm. A question close to this is raised — by Abhinavagupta himself — why is the comparative used rather than the superlative in relation to the Absolute? (pp. 26-27 tr.). P. Muller-Ortega remarks:

> While we might have expected a superlative adjective to be employed to express the notion of ultimacy, the insistent dynamism of the comparative, higher (*uttara*), preserves the supremacy of the *anuttara* over any possible challenges in a way that the superlative, highest (*uttama*), would not have done.[4]

Abhinavagupta is not only expounding a theology of the Absolute, but also addressing the practical, spiritual ways of realising it. In the development of the sixteen interpretations he proceeds from the (grammatically and philosophically) more obvious meanings to the more remote or, we might say, artificial ones.

Since this is the central concept, not only in our text and for the present study, as of all metaphysics, we may dwell for a while on these "definitions."

2. Cf. Betty Heimann, "Indian Grammar, a Guide to India's General Trends of Thought", the analysis of "Positive, Comparative and Superlative in their Philosophical Implications", in: *Facets of Indian Thought*, pp. 168-72. Without knowing the concept of *anuttara*, she writes: "The metaphysical aim does not admit of any comparative notion which is still felt even in the Superlative. The Superlative, too, works on the scale of qualitative value which vanishes in the sphere of the Absolute." (p. 170).

3. In: *Four Studies in the Language of the Veda*, S'Gravenhage (Mouton & Co.), 1959, pp. 95-117.

4. *The Triadic Heart of Śiva*, p. 88.

(1) The first and obvious meaning is a denial in the Absolute of anything "more, additional" (*uttara*).[5] What could be that "more"? Abhinavagupta relates it to the 36 *tattvas* or levels of reality, which comprise the entire cosmotheandric universe.[6] *Anuttara* is that which transcends them, but is not transcended by them. But the word "transcendence" has also to be used with caution, as the following meanings will show. Hence: "The highest, most perfect Consciousness of Bhairava is not like this (i.e. like the *tattvas*), because of its essence being unrestrained, non-relative, delightful flash of knowership" (p. 20). Even this "positive" description of *Anuttara* contains two negations: *anargala* (unrestrained) and *anapekṣa* (not dependent), both pointing to perfect freedom, the fundamental quality of the Absolute in Trika and Pratyabhijñā: *svātantrya*. It is not an abstract concept of freedom or autonomy, but it is intimately related to the experience of wonder: *camatkāratvāt* (p. 7). *Camatkāra* is the experiential aspect of freedom as newness and as joyful surprise.

(2) The second meaning is also straightforward as far as semantics goes. Here he takes *uttara* in the sense of "answer," and hence *anuttara* is "that state in which there is neither question nor answer" (*tathā na vidyate uttaraṁ praśna prativacorūpaṁ yatra*, p. 7, l.16). It means, positively, that *Anuttara* is "that ocean of supreme Consciousness, from which arises infinite insightful knowledge" (p. 21) (*yata eva mahāsaṁvit-sindhoḥ ullasadananta pratibhāparyanta-dhāmna . . .* , p. 7). There is no need of any question, since "that Reality is ever present," ever effulgent, or ever revealed (*satatoditam*), another important qualification of supreme Consciousness.

(3) With the third interpretation starts a series of relativising explanations — in the sense that they upset the common understanding of religious and spiritual, even social values. All Indian soteriologies — including the Buddhist and Jaina systems — assume that there is a state of bondage, of

5. *na vidyate uttaram adhikaṁ yataḥ*, p. 7.

6. I prefer the expression "cosmotheandric," used and interpreted frequently by R. Panikkar, e.g. in his interpretation of the Vedas (cf. *The Vedic Experience*). It implies that these elements are related to the cosmos (the five elements), to the human being (the senses, etc.), and to the Divine (Sadāśiva, Īśvara, Śakti, Śiva).

impurity, of incompleteness, which has to be overcome by liberation — *mukti, nirvāṇa* — there is an ocean of *saṁsāra* which needs to be crossed. All this conception is futile in relation to *Anuttara*.

Semantically, Abhinavagupta takes *uttara* in the sense of *uttaraṇa*, "to cross over," hence to be liberated. But basically this is a dualistic conception which is bound by the polarity "bondage — liberation." Spiritually speaking, this "crossing over" involves an ascension: from body to *prāṇa* to *buddhi* to the void:

> Then the state of the void which connotes the dissolution of all objectivity, and then on attaining the highest pitch (*atiśayadhārāprāptau*) of the successive diminution of all the *malas* (limitations), the empirical individual is freed on the manifestation of the state of Śiva. All this stupendous ascension is, indeed, futile (for were not the previous stages also the expression of Śiva?).
>
> — p. 21

(4) Again in the context of spiritual ascent, the next meaning is a denial of the rising of the *Śakti* in the subtle body through the *cakras*. The basic assumption is again the all-pervasive reality of *anuttara* which is not dependent on its subjective experience in the subtle body.

> Similarly, rising of the *Śakti* from the navel to the heart, then to the throat, then to the palate, then to the crown of the head (*brahma* i.e. *sahasrāra*), then to the Bhairava *bila* (the point above the *sahasrāra*) in the upward succession is ascension. *Anuttara* signifies that in this Śaiva Āgama, mounting to Bhairava by an upward succession through the six *cakras* is not indispensable. — p. 21

(5) Taking *uttara* again in the sense of "crossing, overcoming," *anuttara* denies the necessity to overcome the world and to reach liberation (*mokṣa*) — because in the highest non-dualism even the duality of bondage and liberation is absent.

> *uttaraṇamuttaro mokṣaḥ tat evaṁvidhā uttarā yatra na santi*
>
> — Skt., p. 7

In interpretations 6 and 7 *uttara* is taken in the sense of a statement, and even a demonstrative pronoun like "this" (*idam*), when pointing at the

Highest Reality, is a limitation. Any such statement implies exclusion of the opposite: *uttaraṁ ca śabdanaṁ tat sarvathā īdr̥śaṁ tādr̥śam iti vyavacchedaṁ kuryāt* (p. 7-8). *Anuttara* is that where any limitation or exclusion is absent: *tat yatra bhavati anavacchinnam idam anuttaram* (ibid.). This much may remind of the *neti neti* of the Upaniṣads, but Abhinavagupta goes further than a mere negation. He relates the negation of any statement pointing to Ultimate Reality to spiritual practice and experience:

> Therefore, so long as an empirical experient (*māyīyaḥ pramātā*) is desirous of entering *anuttara* (the Supreme Reality), so long he remains in *vikalpa* (thought-construct) of a particular form. In this context, (it must be borne in mind) that that which is indeterminate (*avikalpitaṁ*) and necessarily inherent in everything (*avinābhāvi*), that is really *anuttara* (Supreme Consciousness), for without it even a determinate concept cannot appear (*tadvinā kalpitarūpāsphuraṇāt*). In fact, in *anuttara* (*tatra*), contemplation, concentration, etc. (*bhāvanādeḥ*) are wholly inapplicable. Therefore it (*anuttara*) has been declared (by Somānanda) to be beyond contemplation, *karaṇa*, etc.

Being an experienced spiritual master, Abhinavagupta adds immediately:

> Not that *bhāvanā* is wholly useless (i.e. it can only bring about the purification of mind, but not the realisation of *anuttara*). *Such anuttara* (i.e. the *nirvikalpa*, thought-free *anuttara*) *abides even in the life of the work-a-day world (for those who have its awareness).*[7] — p. 22

(6) The last sentence: *tat īdr̥śamanuttaraṁ vyavahāravr̥ttiṣvapi evameva* (p. 8) is most significant in that it *relativises* the lofty, transcendent notion of an Absolute removed from the world and from ordinary activity. An Absolute of such description can neither be sought nor reflected upon, because these acts require the help of *vikalpa* which is limited by the individual subject (*māyīyaḥ pramātā*). Hence, instead of landing in an ever greater negation, à la Nāgārjuna, Abhinavagupta catapults the entire argument and arrives on the ground of simple reality: if it is not present here, it cannot be present in any beyond.

7. Emphasis mine.

(7) He illustrates this by a simile contained in one of his *stotras*,[8] comparing the omnipresence of the *Anuttara* to the thin rain which is not visible against the sky, but becomes visible against trees, houses and other objects. It is an image for the subtlety and all-pervasiveness of the Divine, which is not accessible to experience:

tadvat parabhairavo 'tisaukṣmyād |
anubhavagocarameti naiva jātu ||

(8) There are several hierarchies which are being negated in the concept of *Anuttara*. One is the hierarchy of the means of liberation (*upāya*), which are graded as the individual way (*āṇava*), the way of Energy (*śākta*), and the Divine way (*śāmbhava*). The physical elements are equally arranged in a hierarchy, which order will come to be reversed, as we shall see in the context of the *tattva*s and of *bimba-pratibimba*. Even the states of waking, dream, deep sleep, *turya* and *turyātīta* along with their subdivisions are hierarchically classified. The conclusion of denying any such hierarchies is this: "This kind of *uttaratva* (hierarchy) only shows higher and lower and contains the delusion of dualism" (p. 23) (*tat īdṛśamauttarādharya dvaitasaṁmohādhāyi uttaratvam*, pp. 8-9).[9]

(9) This hierarchical sense of inferiority and superiority applies practically in the social realm to the caste system which has no place in *Anuttara*. That this is not only a theoretical statement but has practical implications in Trika has been shown in the context of *adhikāra*: there Abhinavagupta ridicules the restrictions of other Śāstras to a particular, especially the *brāhmaṇa* caste.[10]

(10) Those meanings refer to the hierarchy of Energies as
(11) *uttara*, and *Anuttara* being beyond or being free from
(12) such hierarchies, such as: *paśyantī* — *madhyamā* — *vaikharī*; *Aghorā* — *Ghorā* — *Ghoratarā Śakti*s; *Parā* — *Parāparā* — *Aparā Śakti*s, which are the

8. Skt. p. 8. See Appendix.

9. R. Gnoli has counted these hierarchies separately as meaning 9 (*upāya*) and 10 (*avasthā*), pp. 17-18. Instead he has taken the meanings related to the Śaktis together as number 12. Since Abhinavagupta does not number his definitions, this may be a more logical arrangement.

10. Cf. p. 223 (tr.).

very basis of *Trika*. Their hierarchy is here denied since *Anuttara* is the realm of *Parā* only.

(13) The next meaning is derived from a root *nut/nud*, "to impel," with *tara*, "crossing," hence suggesting "going beyond the worldly existence through impulsion by the process of initiation" (p. 23). He gives a concise description of what happens in initiation,[11] to question it immediately in the light of *anuttara*: "Now in this (process of initiation), how is this kind of mockery made of the unsurpassable consciousness that is self-luminous, omnipresent, unmodified, i.e. unrestricted by the limitations of space, time and form? Therefore *anuttara* is that in which a crossing over does not occur by such impulsion" (pp. 23-24).[12] He adduces the *Parātrīśikā* itself as defining the *nirvāṇagāminī dīkṣā* (v. 26) which does not require any elaborate ritual, but only a knowledge in truth of the "seed of the heart" (*hṛdayabīja*, v. 25). Relativising *dīkṣā* as a process of transmission is also an implicit criticism of the Siddhānta where *dīkṣā* is indispensable for liberation. Although Abhinavagupta himself describes various forms of *dīkṣā* in his *Tantrāloka*, this denial is again at the level of *Anuttara Trika* (or *anupāya* in the scheme of the *Tantrāloka*).

(14) The next meaning shows that all these analyses are not only negations but also positive definitions (*via eminentiae* in the Latin Scholastic tradition). The entire definition is centred on life, derived from the root *an*, to breathe. "'Simple life' means breath, individual self, identified with the body, the psychic organs, etc." (*aṇuḥ ātmā dehapuryaṣṭakādiḥ, tathā ananaṁ jīvanam . . .*, p. 9). With the suffix *uttara* the state of *śūnyapramātā* (the subject conscious

11. "The *guru* (spiritual guide) sets in motion his own consciousness in the consciousness of the disciple. Thus he (the *guru*) applies an initiation which is intended to bring about liberation (*mokṣadā*) by means of the process (*paripāṭyā*) of the central point (*viṣuvat*), etc. which is devoid of the movement of *prāṇa* (exhalation) and *apāna* (inhalation) breaths which assume the utterance of *haṁsa*, and is the junction of both and by the difference of *sthāna* on the *sakala niṣkala* initiation and through the practice of *yojanikā* initiation on the occasion of the last function of the complete oblation." (p. 23)

12. *tat atra caitanyasya svaprakāśasya vyāpino deśakālākāraviśeṣitasya kathaṅkāram imā viḍambanāḥ? tat evaṁvidho nudā preraṇena taraḥ taraṇaṁ yatra na bhavati tat anuttaram.* (p. 9, ll. 6-7).

of only void) is transcended: *tasyaiva uttaratvaṁ sarvataḥ paramārthatayā ādhikyaṁ yatra bhairavaikamayatvāt*, "his transcendence (of the empirical self) means super-excellence in every mode of being because it is the ultimate reality, and (thus) one with Bhairava" (cf. p. 24).

This raises the question of life and of the multiplicity of living and insentient beings. He states that the insentient beings are dependent on the sentient ones, which are defined as possessing the energies of knowledge and action (*jñāna-kriyā*). "These are present in others as well as in oneself. Their difference appears only in the bodies" (*paratrāpi hi svavat dehādireva pṛthaktayā bhāti*, p. 9).[13] In the ultimate sense, life appears in all without difference: *yat punaḥ prāṇanam tat abhedenaiva svaprakāśam* (ibid.).

This brief passage defining life at different levels and in its ultimate unity is astoundingly revealing. It implies that life in its most real and universal pervasive sense is itself *Anuttara*.

(15) This meaning is basically derived from the letter *a* which symbolises *Anuttara*, and which, together with *ha* symbolising Śakti and *anusvāra* constitutes *ahaṁ*, pure I-consciousness, which embraces the entire Sanskrit alphabet.

> *Anuttara* may be analysed as *a+nut+tara* meaning the *tara* or flotation of the *nut* or impulsion of *a*. *A* is the Śakti (*kalā*) who is above the range of *māyā* (*amāyīya*), who is not found in Śruti-śāstra (i.e. in the Vedic tradition), who is the bliss (*camatkāra*) of the very waveless ocean of consciousness abiding in the natural, supreme Light, who covers both the initial and the final stage of the perfect I-consciousness *a* and *haṁ* (the Sanskrit word for "I"), which comprehends the entire cosmos which is the expression of the creative delight of Śakti. *Nut*, i.e. impulsion is the culmination of the expansion (*visargāntatā*) of that (i.e. *kalā*). *Taraḥ* means the floatation or swimming of that *nut*, i.e. the continuance of that state over everything else. (The sense is that though *anuttara* in its expansion is denoted by Śakti and *nara*, yet it is never separated by these. It pervades up to the very end.) — pp. 24 f.

13. Cf. the philosophical discussion on Self and other, which Abhinavagupta carries out in his *IPV*. Cf. the (unpublished) thesis by Isabelle Ratié, Le Soi et l'Autre: identité, différence et altérité dans la philosophie de la Pratyabhijñā, Paris (Sorbonne), 2009 (2 vols.).

(16) The final definition splits the word into *anut-tara*, derived from the root *nut*, to impel. *Anut* is that where "successive action depending on the duality of going and coming in space and time is absent." The other meaning takes *anut* as space, *ākāśa*, and *anuttara* is that which is higher even than *ākāśa* (*tato 'pi sātiśayamanuttaram*, p. 10).[14] *Ākāśa* is, since the Upaniṣads, the symbol of *Brahman*, but it is also the space in which activity takes place, as well as the medium of sound (according to Sāṁkhya cosmology). *Anuttara* is beyond *ākāśa*, because

> The activity of I-consciousness is successionless, because of the absence of the relativity of space and time which are characterised by objectivity (in manifestation) and absence of objectivity (in withdrawal), which is full of the delight of its own consciousness.
> — p. 25

In concluding the argument, why the comparative, instead of the superlative has been used, Abhinavagupta again refers to the dynamic aspect of "graded correlatives" (*uttarakramikapratiyogī* . . ., p. 10), and citing an Āgama, he allows also the possibility of calling the Supreme *anuttamam*.[15] This quotation again brings it down to the level of that which is universally known:

> Here it is in order to indicate graded correlatives along with *uttara* that the *tarap* suffix has been used. Even if there were no occasion to express correlatives, the usage of *anuttamam* would also have borne the same sense.
>
> So in another Āgama, it has been said:
>
> There is no one to whom that One Supreme Reality (*ekamanuttamam*) is unknown which, however, is not known even now to the wise who have become perfect in understanding. — p. 27

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14. Cf. *Vijñāna Bhairava* 128 where the rare expression *nirākāśa* occurs.

nitye nirāśraye śūnye vyāpake kalanojjhite ।
bāhyākāśe manaḥ kṛtvā nirākāśaṁ samāviśet ॥ 128

Fixing one's mind on the external space which is eternal, supportless, empty, all-pervading and free from limitation, in this way one will be absorbed in spacelessness.

15. The lexical meanings are again: unsurpassed, incomparable, best, excellent.

This and other similar texts reject any spiritual elitism, that the Ultimate Reality can be known only to *siddhas*. For that would contradict its all-pervasiveness and non-duality, where even the duality of the enlightened and the unenlightened has to be negated![16]

At the end, Abhinavagupta justifies the enumeration of the number sixteen, not with reference to the Veda,[17] but by a mention of sixteen knots in the *Trikasāra*:

> *Anuttara* is the heart (centre) of all. There is a knot in the heart. Knowing that knot to be sixteenfold, one should perform one's actions at ease. — p. 27

A traditional interpretation relates these knots to the sixteen aspects of consciousness: *pramātā* (subject), *pramāṇa* (means of knowledge), *prameya* (object), *pramiti* (intuitive knowledge), combined with the four states of *sṛṣṭi* (creation), *sthiti* (continuance), *saṁhāra* (dissolution) and *anākhya* (the unnameable), each of the former having these four phases.[18] Generally the *granthī*s are *cakra*s within the yogic body, before they are pierced and liberated in the course of the rise of *kuṇḍalinī*, but the above quote locates them all in the heart.[19] Another meaning of *granthī* is found in the *Kubjikāmata*, where the knots stand for the voids.[20]

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16. Cf. *Vijñāna Bhairava* 124: *sarvatra bhairavo bhāvaḥ sāmānyeṣvapi gocaraḥ* ।
na ca tad-vyatirekeṇa paro 'stītyadvayā gatiḥ ॥

The reality of Bhairava is present everywhere, even in common people. He who knows that nothing exists apart from Him, attains the non-dual state.

17. Cf. Jan Gonda, "The Number Sixteen", in: *Change and Continuity in Indian Religion*, pp. 115-30. "The conclusion that the Vedic speculations about the significance of the number 16 were influenced by an observation of, and theories about, the moon would therefore, in my opinion, deserve no less serious consideration that the supposition that in a considerable number of culture traits it is this 'Vedic significance' of 16 which survives, that is to say, that the foundations of a number of ritual, psychological or philosophical doctrines based on, or incorporating, the idea that 'totality' or the 'metaphysical whole' is sixteenfold were laid in Vedic times and in Vedic culture."

18. Explanation given by Swami Lakshman Joo and reproduced by Jaideva Singh, p. 30, note 21.

19. Cf. *hṛdayagranthi* in the Upaniṣad. (*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* II.2.9) (cf. *PTV*, p. 125).

20. Cf. *Kubjikāmata* 7.81cd–86ab, quoted by S. Vasudeva, *The Yoga of the Mālinīvijayottaratantra*, p. 266, note 47: *lagne granthitrayam devi khagatir nātrasaṁśayaḥ*, "O Goddess, there will take place motion in the void, (of this) there is no doubt."

However, the number sixteen and its Vedic-Upaniṣadic antecedents is significant, because the symbolism comes close to the Tāntric symbolism. The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* contains the *Ṣoḍaśakalāvidyā* (IV.4-9). According to H. Lüders, the fourfold division of the Puruṣa in Puruṣa-Sūkta (*R̥gveda* X.90.3, 4) is the basic model for the sixteen aspects of *Brahman* in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (four times four),[21] and the actual sixteenfold division of Prajāpati in the *Yajurveda* is the direct antecedent.[22] Prajāpati, who is also identified with the year, is symbolically identified with the moon, and the fifteen phases (*kalā*) of the moon are his, whereas the sixteenth part is immutable.[23] Just as in Tāntric symbolism, there is also mention of a seventeenth *kalā*, which transcends time.[24] Thus, on the basis of these Vedic antecedents, the Puruṣa, Prajāpati, and *Brahman* are connected with the number sixteen to indicate completeness. This completeness is implied in the sixteen explanations of *Anuttara* by Abhinavagupta.

The theme of *Anuttara* will continue as the leitmotiv of the entire text, but it was important to follow closely Abhinavagupta's sixteenfold hermeneutics.

First we propose to assess Abhinavagupta's hermeneutics of the "word" *Anuttara*. I consciously would not call it a "concept" or a "term."[25] "Word" is closer to *Vāc*, one of the central themes of the *Parātrīśikā Vivaraṇa*, and the "symbol" of *Anuttara* is the phoneme *a*, as given in meaning 15. Hermeneutics or different forms of *nirvacana*[26] is the only instrument that the author has to deduce from the rules of grammar and reveal the ultimately inexpressible meaning/meanings of the word. What he achieves by his ingenious method is extraordinary: he avoids

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21. Cf. for the whole argument: H. Lüders, *Philologica Indica*, Göttingen (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht), 1940, pp. 521-23.

22. *Vājasaneyī Saṁhitā* VIII.36.

23. Cf. *Br̥hadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* I.5.14.

24. Cf. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* V.2.2.3, and other references given by Lüders, p. 523.

25. Cf. R. Panikkar on *śūnya — pūrṇa* as "symbols", not "concepts", in: *Void and Fullness in the Buddhist, Hindu and Christian Traditions*, pp. 11-13.

26. P. Muller-Ortega still calls them "folk etymologies," but this pejorative meaning has been overcome by an understanding of the hermeneutic devices developed by Sanskrit grammarians and commentators. Cf. the excellent study by E. Kahrs (see Bibliography).

and negates all dichotomies: transcendent-immanent (*viśvottīrṇa-viśvamaya*), superior-inferior (the denial of all hierarchies), bondage-liberation, etc. are relativised (not abolished). First of all, *Anuttara* is far more comprehensive a word than a philosophical (or theological) "concept," therefore the hierarchies which are dissolved in its light rest at different levels and in different realms: from the social (caste hierarchy), to the elementary (the order of the *bhūtas*), to the mental/psychic states (*avasthā*: waking, dreaming, etc.), to the order of Divine Energies (different groupings of Śaktis in the Tantras), to the spiritual paths or means of liberation (*upāya*), etc. The very process of spiritual advancement, such as happens in initiation (*dīkṣā*), and the stages of awakening or opening of the *cakras* in the spiritual ascent, all this becomes meaningless at the level of *Anuttara*.

Relativising all these realms of understanding and experiencing *Anuttara* is itself a process of liberating it from its projections and identifications — and hence liberating the reader/disciple.[27] And yet, Abhinavagupta does not land in a Nāgārjunian series of negations. Although *Anuttara* is beyond any *vikalpa*, it is yet the most living and present Reality — it is Life itself (meaning 14 derived from *an*, to breathe), and hence it is known to everybody, in spite of being unknowable or difficult to know (*durvijñeya*, cf. *Tantrāloka* II.28).[28] If *Anuttara* cannot be defined or comprehended, it is actually a state to be experienced: *anuttara-pada* is used by Abhinavagupta in his *Tantrāloka* in the context of all four *upāyas*. One would expect it to correspond primarily to *anupāya*: the pathless path, no-means, and the actual domain of the Absolute. Significantly, as he links the *āhnikas* (chapters) by concluding the previous one with half a verse and completing the verse at the beginning of the next, he uses a similar expression in linking the 2nd and 3rd *āhnikas*, describing *anupāya* and *śāmbhava* respectively:

> *idam anuttaradhāmavivecakaṁ* ।
> *vigalitaupāyikaṁ kṛtamāhnikam* ॥
>
> — *TĀ* II.50

> This is the end of the chapter which examines the domain (state) of the Unsurpassable without any means.

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27. Cf. the *Anuttarāṣṭikā*, given in Appendix.

28. Cf. *VBh* 124.

And the third *āhnika* begins thus:

> *atha paraupāyikaṁ praṇigadyate* |
> *padam anuttarameva maheśituḥ* ||
> — III.1

> Now the supreme means is being spoken of which is nothing but the unsurpassable state/domain of the Great Lord.

The use of expressions like *anuttarapada*[29] as the goal of all the ways is an indication, as Abhinavagupta states in the first *āhnika*, that the ways are different but the goal is the same Absolute.[30]

Anuttara as Bestowing the Perfection of Totality: *Kaulikasiddhidam*

In terms of the sixteen meanings Abhinavagupta has explored the hermeneutics of *Anuttara* in itself, without relation to the other important concepts of the first verse, and without its relation to ontological expansion or manifestation. *Anuttaram* in the question of the Devī is that which bestows *kaulikasiddhi*, i.e. she already knows this power and asks only about the "how": *katham*, to achieve it. Therefore Abhinavagupta also takes up the question related to *kaulikasiddhi* following the hermeneutics of the *Anuttara*.

What is meant by *kaulikasiddhi*? If the Absolute or Śiva is *akula*, without manifestation, beyond differentiation, *kula* is the totality, the "family" or group of energies,[31] or simply Śakti, the cosmos. *Kaulika* is derived from *kula* and synonym of *kaula*.[32] Abhinavagupta is giving four interpretations of *kaulikasiddhi*, but before going into that we may look at the brief definition he gives in his *Tantrāloka* along with Jayaratha's commentary:

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29. Cf. also *TĀ* IV.278, V.19, 42, 53, 117, 119, 125, 147, 156, 159.

30. Cf. *TĀ* I.166.

31. Much has been written about *kula* and its multiple meanings. Since it denotes the totality, the body, the group and community or family, the semantic field connotes an organic whole integrating all the parts. Cf. *Tāntrikābhidhānakośa*, vol. II, pp. 120 ff.

32. Cf. ibid. under *Kaulika, Kaulikī*, p. 142.

akulasyāsya devasya kulaprathanaśālinī |
kaulikī sā parā śaktir aviyukto yayā prabhuḥ ||
— *TĀ* III.67

The Supreme Energy *Kaulikī* of the unmanifest God (*akula*) is She who is capable of expanding (unfolding) the totality (*kula*), and the Lord is inseparably united with Her.

Jayaratha: Here the Supreme Reality which is nothing but the Unsurpassable Light (*anuttaraḥ prakāśa eva*) consists in the highest reflective awareness (*parā parāmarśa*)[33] which is complete (*pūrṇa*), unspeakable (*anākhya*), and which does not tolerate any separate definition of Śiva, Śakti, etc. It is that (Supreme Reality) which, out of its own perfect freedom, and initially manifests it in the form of Śiva and Śakti.

Although *kula* and *akula* are not really defined in this text, it is clear that the Supreme, Unmanifest Absolute desires out of Its own perfect freedom to manifest the universe, and that the Energy behind the unfolding or expansion is precisely *kaulikī śakti*. "It is possible to participate and to identify with this creative Power of the Divinity, and it is that which is called 'the perfection of *kula*' (*kaulikasiddhi*), to which the 36 stanzas of the *Parātrīśikā* are consecrated. . . ."[34] The words "participation" and "identification" are significant, because the "how" (*katham*) of the question of the Devī is not simply theoretical, it is a question leading to identification (hence *kaulikasiddhidam*).

Although we are not going here into the question of the difference between the Kula and Kaula schools or traditions,[35] it is still important to see the high value attached to the Kula as a pervasive spiritual doctrine and practice, as expressed poetically by Abhinavagupta in his *Tantrāloka*:

Like the fragrance in the flower, the oil in the sesame seed, the

33. Cf. a discussion on the different meanings and possible translations of *parāmarśa* in: Isabelle Ratié, *Otherness in the Pratyabhijñā Philosophy*, p. 17, note 51.

34. *Tāntrikābhidhānakoṣa*, vol. II, p. 142 (tr. from French).

35. Cf. A. Sanderson in: *Sāmarasya*, p. 130 ff.

living soul in the body and the taste in water, the Kula resides inside all Śāstras as their essence. — *TĀ* XXXV.34[36]

The word *siddhi* in the compound *kaulikasiddhi* does not refer to any limited power (as in the *Yogasūtras*), but it denotes accomplishment, perfection, fulfilment. It is that perfection which only the *Anuttara* can bestow.

Thus, in relation to *kaulikasiddhi*, the *Anuttara* assumes the dynamism of manifestation of the universe in its macro and microcosmic implications. In other words, the integration of the totality takes place.

Abhinavagupta expands four meanings of *kaulikasiddhidam:*

(1) "Kula" is gross (*sthūla*), subtle (*sūkṣma*), and ulterior (*parā*), *prāṇa* (life-breath), *indriya* (senses), *bhūtādi* (the five gross physical elements) both in a collective sense (i.e. in the sense of totality of manifestations), and in the sense of cause-effect. . . .

So *kula* or totality is so called, because Consciousness itself abides in the various forms of objectivity (*yathāvasthānāt*) by means of coagulation, and Consciousness itself (voluntarily) assumes bondage by its own Freedom. It is said: "the word *kula* is used in the sense of coagulation and kindred" (*saṁstyāne bandhuṣu ca*).

Without Consciousness which is Light itself, no entity which is devoid of the light of manifestation (*aprakāśamānaṁ vapuḥ*) can come into existence.

Now *kaulikī* is that which is related to the whole universe including the body; *siddhi* or achievement is the acquisition of bliss (*ānanda*) by turning round (*parivṛtya*) to have a firm hold on that very principle, i.e. the light of the universal consciousness (*tathātva-dārḍhyaṁ*), in other words, identity with the perfect I-feeling of Śiva, who is the highest consciousness and whose nature is *spanda* or the eternal throb of delight in manifestation (*hṛdyaya-svabhāva-parasaṁvidātmaka-śiva-vimarśa-tādātmyam*). So *kaulika-siddhidaṁ* is that which enables one to have such achievement. In other words, by achieving identity with *anuttara*, the totality of manifestation becomes like that *anuttara* itself (pp. 31-32).

This passage does not need any comment.

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36. Tr. (partly modified) by J. Hanneder, *Abhinavagupta's Philosophy of Revelation*, p. 32.

(2) The second interpretation relates to the perception of objects "by means of the body, *prāṇa* and *puryaṣṭaka*," i.e. the psychic organs.

> *Kaulika-siddhidaṁ*, therefore, means that which gives, i.e. brings about the definite grasp of objective and subjective phenomena by means of *kula*, i.e. by means of the body, *prāṇa* and *puryaṣṭaka*. Indeed it is the body, mind, etc. which, through the penetration in them of the energy of the eternal *a*, i.e. "Śiva," and His externalising Śakti, symbolised by *ha*, the energy that is beyond the sphere of time and that mounts the intermediate stair of *prāṇa*, etc. which bring about the success in the form of the definite perception of the existing entities. — p. 33

The implication is that the power to grasp an object is not inherent in the body and its organs, but this power (*siddhi*) is bestowed (*dam*) by the central I-consciousness combining Śiva (*a*) and Śakti (*ha*), i.e. *ahaṁ*.

(3) The third meaning takes *kaulikasiddhidam* in the highest sense of liberation-in-life (*jīvanmukti*), which brings about spontaneously the supernormal powers (*siddhis* in the limited sense). This is a participation in the ever-risen Śivahood, as shown by the quote from Somānanda's *Śivadṛṣṭi*:

> *bhāvanākaraṇābhyāṁ kiṁ śivasya satatoditeḥ* — *Śivadṛṣṭi*, VII.101

> Since Śiva is ever present, what is the use of (spiritual practices such as) contemplation or bodily practice?

(4) The fourth interpretation is cosmological and turns the meaning around: here it is not a question of attaining the perfection of liberation, but of the Absolute manifesting *in* and *as* the world.

> *Kaulika* means *kule-jāta*, i.e. born or sprung in *kula*. *Siddhi* means the achievement of the appearance of diversity. . . .
>
> It is *anuttara* itself of the nature of eminent Light, which has implicitly within itself the expansion of the universe as identical with consciousness, that explicitly evolves diversity through the abundance of the delight of power issuing from its own unsurpassed freedom. — p. 34

In a way this comes back to the first meaning relating to the way the Supreme Consciousness assumes external form: it is by "coagulation or crystallisation," *āśyāna*. The image implied is that the liquidity of pure Consciousness becomes solidified. Jayaratha quotes a verse[37] making this simile explicit:

> *āśyānaṁ cidrasasyaughaḥ sākāratvam upāgatam* ।
> *jagadrūpatayā vande pratyakṣabhairavaṁ vapuḥ* ॥
> — *TĀV* VIII.2 (p. 1352)[38]

> I adore the visible body of Bhairava
> in the form of the world
> who has assumed concrete form
> as a coagulation of the liquid mass of Consciousness.

The motive for this assuming of form is nothing but the Divine Freedom: *svātantrya*.[39]

Immediacy: Explanation of *Sadyaḥ*

To complete the first part of the sentence of the question of the Devī, the mode of attaining *kaulikasiddhi* has to be explained: *sadyaḥ*, "at once, immediately, instantaneously." Since *Anuttara* is the agent bestowing *kaulikasiddhi*, this act of bestowing cannot be subject to time. In other words, in the context of Anuttara Trika illumination itself cannot be bound by an earlier or later, it has to be sudden, instantaneous and total.[40]

Abhinavagupta does not rely on the etymology which is derived from "today": *adya*, as a unit of time (lit. "on the same day"), since it is a conventional and relative concept of time.

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37. From the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*?

38. Cf. also Kṣemarāja, *Pratyabhijñā Hṛdaya*, comm. on *sūtra* 4: *tataḥ cidrasāśyāna-rūpāśeṣatattvabhuvana bhāvatattvapramātayi prathate*, "Then he unfolds himself in the totality of manifestation, viz. principles (*tattva*), worlds (*bhuvana*), entities (*bhāva*) and their respective experients (*pramātras*) that are only a solidified form (*āśyānarūpa*) of cit-essence." (Jaideva Singh, p. 55).

39. *PTV* : *tathā kulaṁ bodhasyaiva āśyānarūpatayā yathāvasthānāt bodhasvātantryādeva ca asya bandhābhimānāt*, p. 11.

40. In this respect the *PT* and the *Vijñāna Bhairava* both stand for sudden enlightenment.

> So, *sadyaḥ* in this context means at the same instant. Sameness here does not connote sameness of the moment, but rather "terminating in Reality" (*tattvaparyavasāyī*), for it is in this way that the word *sadyaḥ* is to be understood. Therefore if *sadyaḥ* is to be taken in the sense of "at that very moment," then on account of the limitation of the present moment, the past and future moments would be rejected . . . (p. 32).

It is the totality implied in *kula/kaulika* which is necessarily beyond time:

> For the *kula* (total objectivity) that has been described (so far) is the collective whole (*cakra*) of the rays of the divine Sun, viz. Bhairava and is of the essence of Light (in its external aspect). When, however, that (*kula*) acquires *nirodha* (rest, stoppage) by identification with the inner supreme Bhairava Consciousness, then it is full of the relish of the ambrosia of supreme bliss, is *anuttara* (transcendent to all aspects and phases), beyond space and time, eternal of the form of *visarga*, and ever-risen. — p. 32

Anuttara and the Interconnectedness of All Things:
The Sūtra: *uttarasyāpi anuttaram*

To round off the discussion on *Anuttara* we have to move to Bhairava's answer which, in a sense, only reiterates the complete question of the Devī. After addressing her[41] he utters a *sūtra*:

> *uttarasyāpi anuttaram*

While giving again different interpretations of *uttara* and *anuttara*, Abhinavagupta develops, in this context, the doctrine of the interdependence or interrelatedness of all things: *sarvaṁ sarvātmakam*.[42] Taking *sarvaṁ*, the totality, the all, and also a

41. This address will be subject of chapter 4.

42. This "theory" will occur in different contexts along the commentary. Its antecedents are found in early Sāṁkhya and in Jaina Philosophy: Cf. A. Wezler "Studien zum Dvādaśāracakra des Śvetāmbara Mallavādin. I. Der *sarvātmakatvavāda*", in : *Studien zum Jainismus und Buddhismus*, Wiesbaden (Franz Steiner), 1981, pp. 359-408; "Paralipomena zum Sarvātmakatvavāda (I)", in: *WZKS* XXVI, 1982, pp. 149-66; "Paralipomena zum Sarvasarvātmakatva-vāda II", in: *Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik*, Band 16/17, Reinbek 1992, pp. 287-314; "Remark on the *sarvātmakatvavāda*", in: *Philosophical Essays. Anantlal Thakur Felicitation Volume*, Calcutta (Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar), →

name of Śiva as encompassing the whole of Reality, as the leading word, he connects it by using the following *śloka* from the *Mahābhārata*[43] (also found in the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*):

> *yasmin sarvaṁ yataḥ sarvam*
> *yaḥ sarvaṁ sarvataśca yaḥ* |
> *yaśca sarvamayo nityaṁ*
> *tasmai sarvātmane namaḥ* ||

He takes this verse part by part and connects *sarvaṁ* with *Anuttara* in a genial hermeneutic move. First, he takes the negation of *uttara* in the sense of the impossibility of an answer. If *uttara* is the second part of the text which deals with expansion then a possible meaning is that "even the posterior part of the book cannot offer its answer" (p. 76). And ultimately the answer itself leads into silence:

> Even of my answer given in the *paśyantī* stage which is the first expansion of *parā* this *anuttara* is the highest truth, i.e. this non-answer (*anuttara*) or silence is the highest truth (p. 76).

Later, in the context of the *sūtra*: *uttarasyāpi anuttaram* (v. 3b) at the beginning of the answer of Bhairava, he goes into the dynamics of *anuttara* in relation to *uttara*.

But the all-inclusive meaning is that where:

> *Uttara* may also mean the phenomena — desirables, knowables, and actions — promoted by the trident, viz. *icchā-śakti*, *jñāna-śakti* and *kriyā-śakti*. *Anuttara* is that stage where all the above and *uttara* cease.
> — p. 77

> *uttarasya triśūlapreraṇādimayasya yat anuttaraṁ viśrāntisthānam* |
> — p. 28

The inclusive meaning is again related to the earlier discussed *kaulika vidhi*. Here Abhinavagupta gives another interpretation: *kaulika* = *kula* and *akula*, *vidhi* = *mahāsṛṣṭi*. "The Great Creation" refers to the sum-total of all creations, dissolutions,

→ 1987, pp. 166-81; however, the interpretation in the non-dualist Śaivism of Abhinavagupta is unique.

43. *Mahābhārata*, Śāntiparvan XII.46-86; *Yogavāsiṣṭha*.

etc. in which everything is present. It is simply the All: *idaṁ sarvam*. He states this all-inclusiveness unequivocally:

> Now *anuttara* is that from which proceeds this "great manifestation," i.e. *mahāsṛṣṭi* which enfolds within itself hundreds of crores of unlimited *māyīya* (phenomenal) creations. As has been said, "That from which proceeds everything." So, this universe consisting of *cit-pramātā* (i.e. *śūnya pramātā*), *citta* (i.e. *puryaṣṭaka pramātā*), *prāṇa* (i.e. *prāṇapramātā*), *deha* (i.e. *deha-pramātā*, i.e. four kinds of experients), pleasure and pain, i.e. subjective experience, senses, i.e. means of experience, the five elements and jar, etc., i.e. subtle and gross objects of experience abide without difference in one, supreme, divine Consciousness as simply forms of consciousness (*bodhātmakena rūpeṇa*). Though the divine Universal Consciousness never ceases to exist, for it ceasing, there will be the contingency of universal darkness, yet there does not exist difference consisting of reciprocal absence (of object), for all objects are omnifarious in that state. If all things were not situated in that universal Bhairava Consciousness, then even the initial indeterminate perception which is of use in urging the senses towards their objects would not be there. Therefore, the entire multitude of existents exists there, without the appearance of appropriate objectivity (lit. thisness), identically with I-consciousness only, void of all differentiation. There is absolutely no difference there whatsoever. In that universal Bhairava consciousness, the entire manifestation (*kaulika vidhi*) lies clearly at rest.
>
> — p. 77

kulākulātmā prāk vyākhyāto vidhīyamānatvāt vidhiḥ mahāsṛṣṭi-rūpo garbhīkṛtānantasṛṣṭyādikoṭiśato yasmātprasṛta etadeva tadanuttaraṁ, yaduktam . . . yataḥ sarvaṁ . . . iti, tathāhi idaṁ viśvaṁ cit-citta-prāṇa-sukhaduḥkhendriya-bhūta ghaṭādimayamekasyāṁ parasyāṁ parameśvaryāṁ bhairavasaṁvidi avibhāgenaiva bodhātmakena rūpeṇa āste, yadyapi bodhātmakaṁ rūpaṁ nāstameti jātucidapi tadastamaye aprakāśamānatāpatteḥ, tathāpi parasparabhāvātmako 'vacchedaḥ tatra nāsti, viśvātmāna eva bhāvāḥ, tatra ca yadi eṣāmavasthitiḥ na syāt tat prathamānusaṁdhānādikameva akṣapreraṇopayogyapi na bhavet iti samucitānuditedantākam ahaṁparāmarśamātrābhinnameva bhāvajātaṁ vigatabhedakalanaṁ tiṣṭhati.

— Skt., pp. 28-29

He comments on the first phrase of the *Mahābhārata śloka* in terms of the Spanda doctrine: *yasmin sarvaṁ*, in which everything exists.

The universal nature of everything, i.e. the 36 *tattva*s or levels of reality is contained in Śiva as *sāmānya spanda*: universal vibration:

> All this (universe) consisting of thirty-six categories, though created by Śiva who being of supreme Śakti, is of the nature of universal creative pulsation (*sāmānya spanda*) rests in that consciousness itself in its own form which is predominantly Śakti, i.e. characterised by particular creative pulsation (*viśeṣa spanda*). — p. 77

In spite of that differentiation, "really speaking it is only one, viz. *anuttara* who is the essence of the creative energy, viz. the autonomous I-consciousness." (p. 78) (*vastutaḥ punarekameva svatantracinmayamahamityaiśvaryaśakti-sāram anuttaram*, p. 29).

Here Abhinavagupta touches one of the central themes of the *Parātrīśikā* which is contained in the concept or rather symbol of the heart, as given in the answer by Bhairava:

> *kauliko 'yaṁ vidhirdevi*
> *mama hṛdvyomnyavasthitaḥ* | 4 ab

We will come to the theme of the heart and of the central I-consciousness separately (ch. 6).

Abhinavagupta then insists on the unobstructed nature of *Anuttara*, as shown in the verse from the *Spanda Kārikā*, which agrees with the *Mahābhārata* verse:

> *yatra sthitamidaṁ sarvam kāryaṁ yasmācca nirgatam* |
> *tasyānāvṛtarūpatvānna nirodho 'sti kutracit* ||
> — *Spanda Kārikā* I.2

> That in which this All is established, and from which it has come forth — since its nature is unobstructed, there cannot be any obstacle at all.

And he comments:

> Even if He (Śiva) is supposed to be obstructed by a cover (e.g. *māyā*) He still shines by His freedom in the form of that cover itself, and thus the Lord is always of the nature of knowledge and activity.
> — p. 79

In relation to the phrases of the *Mahābhārata* verse he states that the relative pronoun *yat* conveys the sense of all the cases, i.e.: *yasmin sarvam*

yatra, yataḥ, yasmāt, yaḥ

Here is another argument from grammar for the all-pervasiveness of *Anuttara*, namely that the cases of (Sanskrit) grammar exhaust all possible relationships, in this case the relationship between *Anuttara* and the cosmic manifestation, the *idaṁ sarvam*.

In the first explanation of this *sūtra*, Abhinavagupta insists on the meaning of the genitive as "without taking into account," "leaving aside," and understands it in the sense, that "even the higher (*uttara*) is identical with *Anuttara*." R. Gnoli has a note which brings out the meaning implied: "*Uttara* is such in as far as it is identified with *Anuttara*, is an aspect of it, and therefore *Anuttara* is such even without taking it into account, whether it is present or not."[44] *Uttara*, which implies the empirical reality, cannot exist except in its identification with *Anuttara*:

uttaramapi anuttara tādātmyenaiva bhavennānyathā ।

— p. 28

And therefore even the difference (between the levels of reality, i.e. the empirical *uttara*) is resting only on the non-difference (*bheda hi ayamuttararūpo nitarāmeva abheda-bhuvamadhiśayya tathā bhavet*, ibid.).

In the context of this commentary Abhinavagupta quotes two short phrases by Somānanda. One is a comment on Bhairava saying: *kathayāmi*, "I am going to tell/reveal this": The subject is Bhairava who says "owing to the eagerness of the enquiry; that it is I who, being present as Consciousness in all, declare this."[45] The second quote is again expressed in the brevity and directness typical of Somānanda's style:

kiṁ bahunā sarvamevānuttaram-anuttaratvāt । — p. 32

What is there to say much? Everything is *anuttara*, because of being *Anuttara*.

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44. Ibid., p. 49-50 note 151, tr. from Italian.

45. Gnoli takes the quote to contain only the first sentence: *kathyayāmi iti uccārayāmi utkalikāta iti* (p. 30 of J.S. Skt.).

It sounds as though it were simply a tautological statement,[46] which comes of course at the end of a whole progressive development (which is missing in the case of Somānanda's commentary). But is not any true philosophical statement a kind of tautology?

This follows the last phrase of the *Mahābhārata* verse:

yaśca sarvamayo nityaṁ
tasmai sarvātmane namaḥ | — p. 32

He who is eternally present in all things,
him, the Self of all, do I adore.

Abhinavagupta inserts an ontology in the whole interpretation by another *nirvacana* analysis of the word *sadyaḥ* (as occurring in the answer of Bhairava), deriving it from *sat*, being: *sat* + *yaḥ*, he who is the Supreme Lord is that Being, identifying *sat* with *akula*, *anuttara*, *dhruva* (p. 30 Skt., p. 80 tr.).

tadevedaṁ sarvaṁ sat — kaulikavidhirūpam

All this is Being, in the form of the *kaulikavidhi* (the order of creation).

It is an ontological argument to reach the same conclusion: "No object whatever can exist apart from the pure Bhairava who is both Light of Consciousness (*prakāśa*) and its Reflection (*vimarśa*)." (J.S. tr., p. 80; Gnoli, p. 54). We need not go further into this argument, which he sums up in the phrase of the *śloka*:

yaḥ sarvaṁ

Who is all.

At the end of the commentary connecting *Anuttara* with *uttara*, with *kaulikavidhi*, and with *sarvam*, he steps down from the high level of his argumentation to the simple explanation by people "without any knowledge of grammar, logic, traditional teaching and personal experience" (p. 32), summarising the development:

By the use of the words *anuttara*, etc. in one and a half verses, the question pertaining to Śiva has been put. In *hṛdayasthā tu yā śaktiḥ* the

46. Or a circular argument, the *hetu*, *anuttaratvāt* coincides ontologically with the *pakṣa*. Such *hetu*s are called *svabhāva hetu*. In any case the statement need not be construed as an *anumāna*.

> question pertains to Śakti. In that part of the book which contains the answer, viz., *śr̥ṇu devi . . . uttarasyāpyanuttaraṁ,* the explanation offered is: "Listen about *uttara,* i.e. the expansion of Śakti, and also about *anuttara,* i.e. the expansion of Śiva." In this case, if the explanation is from the point of view of Trika, there arises the contingency of a third question regarding *nara.*

With this summary ends the *bimba* part of the text, which he calls even *granthāntaram,* as if it is another text.

4

Khecarīsamatā

Harmony with the Energy of Consciousness Moving-in-the-Void

THE question of the Devī in verse one is aimed at attaining a state of equality, equilibrium, sameness or harmony (*samatā*) with the Power called *khecarī*. Here the problem of translation becomes acute, because none of the proffered translations can satisfy.[1] The reason is the condensed nature of the Sanskrit language, and the richness and multi-layered implications of Tāntric symbolism. This Tāntric symbolism however goes back to the Veda, as Abhinavagupta himself indicates by equating *kha* (space, void) with *Brahman* (p. 38 tr.). Although *khecarī* becomes a specific concept of the Krama School, the Vedic implications of *kha* have to be taken into account for its interpretation. *Kha* means the void, the hollow of the axle-wheel which makes the movement of the wheel possible. If it is empty, the movement is smooth, hence *su-kha*, if it is blocked, there is obstruction, hence *duḥ-kha*. Then *kha* denotes the open space, the sky, as a synonym of *vyoman* and *ākāśa*. The microcosmic correspondence is the inner space in the "cave of the heart" (*hṛdayākāśa*), which, according to the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* contains the entire cosmos.[2] Besides, since the *Atharvaveda*, *kha* denotes the (seven or nine) openings or "holes" in the body, and hence stands for the sense organs.[3] In the context of Tantra *khecarī* is related to the "wheel of energies" (*śakticakra*), which is connected

1. "Sameness with the Universal Consciousness-power" (Jaideva Singh), "L'eterovaga entra in uno stato di equilibrio" (R. Gnoli).

2. Cf. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, VIII.1.

3. Cf. *Atharvaveda* X.2.6ab: *kaḥ sapta khāni vi tatarda śīrṣāṇi karṇāvimau nāsike cakṣāṇī mukham* । "Who bored out the seven apertures in his head — these ears, the nostrils, the eyes, the mouth?" (tr. W.D. Whitney).

with the senses.[4] We need not go further in this analysis, but all these meanings have to be kept in mind in understanding *khecarī*: the absolute Void which is identified with *Brahman*, symbolised by the sky; the inner space in the heart; the sense organs, and the dynamism of the wheel, strengthened by the suffix *-cara/-carī*, "moving."

Khecarī is then a Śakti, or rather, the highest dynamism of *Anuttara*. In the Krama system she is part of a sequence (hence *krama*) of four manifestations of the Power. In the brief definition of the *Parātrīśikā Vivaraṇa*:

> The meaning of *khecarī* is as follows. That Śakti is *khecarī*, who abiding in *kha*, i.e. *brahma* which is identical with herself roams about, i.e. functions in various ways (*carati*). This *khecarī* in her universal aspect functions (*carati*) in three ways. She (as *gocarī*) brings about a knowledge of objects, (as *dikcarī*) effects movements, such as grasping, relinquishing, etc., (as *bhūcarī*) exists in the form of objective existents. Thus this *khecarī* exists as *gocarī* in the form of *antaḥkaraṇa* (the inner psychic apparatus), as *dikcarī* in the form of *bahiṣkaraṇa* (i.e. outer senses), as *bhūcarī* in the form of objective existents, as (the colour) blue, etc., or subjective existents as pleasure, etc.
>
> Similarly, in the individual aspects, the *Śakti*s that are known successively as *vyomacarī* in the void (of consciousness) in which the distinction between subject and object has not yet appeared, as *gocarī* in the form of *antaḥkaraṇa* in which there is just appearance of knowledge, as *dikcarī* in the form of the outer senses suggesting the appearance of diversity in which state there is diversity of the knower from the knowable object, as *bhūcarī* in the form of *bhāvas* or existents in which there is preponderance of clear diversity in the objects, are in reality, according to the principle enunciated, non-distinct from *khecarī* which abides in the essential nature i.e. *anuttara*. Thus that Śakti of the Supreme Lord is only one. — pp. 38-39

In the context of the *Parātrīśikā, khecarī* is this One Energy containing all other lower aspects of Her manifestations, that are one with Her.

Now the aim of the question of the Devī is to attain *samatā* with this Power.

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4. Cf. an excellent description of the *śakticakra* by M. Dyczkowski in his *The Doctrine of Vibration*, pp. 117-38.

Samatā or *sāmya* has been variously translated as "equality, sameness, homogeneousness, balance, equanimity," etc. But according to the grammarian Patañjali[5] *sama* does not mean "equal" in a quantitative sense. It means rather "proportionate, fitting, harmonious," and the example given is quite down-to-earth: if in a dish of *dāl* the amount of salt would be (quantitatively) equal, the dish would be spoilt. Saying that salt should be *sama* rather implies, "in right proportion," so as to create a harmonious taste. Similarly, at another level, the ideal of *samatā* relates to balance, harmony, a sense of oneness which does not deny the difference of the component elements of the given unity. "The word *samatā* refers to a vision of universal harmony, of "equality" of all beings, and the equal feelings of compassion and impartiality towards all beings, which is neither stoic indifference nor democratic equality."[6]

But here the goal is harmony with the Power of Consciousness Moving-in-the-Void: *khecarī-samatā*. While proposing a detailed interpretation, Abhinavagupta employs a phenomenological and psychological method. He analyses the emotions like passion and anger (*kāma-krodha*) which are nothing but expressions of the same Power, but which can either lead downward to a state of disharmony (*vaiṣamya*, the opposite of *samatā*), or which can lead to union with the Divine Power which is the very source of all emotions. *Samatā* means also that the lower energies (*gocarī, dikcarī, bhūcarī*) are not to be seen in separation from the central Consciousness-Power, *khecarī*:

> That very *khecarī* is perceived separately (from the Divine) in the form of desire, anger, etc. However, the *samatā* or sameness of *khecarī* means the perception of her full divine nature everywhere (in *śabda* or sound, *rūpa* or form and colour, *rasa* or taste, *gandha* or smell, *sparśa* or contact) because of her being of the nature of perfect Bhairava. *Even an iota of the ignorance of the nature of the integral anuttara amounts to a contrary state of the mind.* [emphasis mine] It is this contrary state that constitutes transmigratory existence (*saṁsāra*). — p. 39

This sentence (in emphasis) is crucial:

5. Cf. *Pāṇini Sūtra* V.1.119 with Patañjali, *Mahābhāṣya*.

6. B. Bäumer, "Universal Harmony: Samatā in Kashmiri Śaivism", in: *Universal Responsibility. A Felicitation Volume in Honour of His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, on His Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. by R.C. Tewari, Krishna Nath, New Delhi, 1995, pp. 111-19.

aṇumātramapi avikalānuttarasvarūpāparijñānameva cittavr̥ttīnāṁ vaiṣamyam । — p. 14, ll. 2-3

Saṁsāra is nothing but the non-recognition of the unfragmented (*avikala*, whole) nature of *Anuttara* which leads to imbalance, disharmony (*vaiṣamya*). Positively it means that in all experiences and sensations, even the apparently negative ones, the awareness of their oneness with Supreme Consciousness should not be lost sight of. It is the analysis of *vaiṣamya* which throws light on its opposite, *samatā*.

> When owing to the absence of limitation, the aberration (*vaiṣamya*) of the modes of the mind caused by the non-recognition of the essential nature ceases, the very states of anger, delusion, etc., appear as only an expression of the consciousness of the perfect, revered Lord Bhairava Himself. — p. 40

Abhinavagupta adduces some of the oft-quoted phrases by Somānanda in his *Śivadr̥ṣṭi*:

sukhe duḥkhe vimohe ca sthito 'haṁ paramaḥ Śivaḥ ।
— VII.105

> Whether in pleasure, in suffering, or in delusion, I abide (in all states) as the Supreme Śiva.

And the phrase which explains that even negative states lead to an expansion of consciousness:

duḥkhe 'pi pravikāsena sthairyārthe dhr̥tisaṁgamāt ।
— Ibid., V.9

> Even in pain there is expansion (of consciousness) with the purpose of steadfastness (or: patience, tranquillity), due to association with firm endurance.

Most of the spiritual practices (*dhāraṇā*) of the *Vijñāna Bhairava*, and implicitly of the *Parātrīśikā*, are based on the intensification of any experience or emotion which leads to the expansion of consciousness.[7] The same is also propounded by the *Spanda Kārikā*.[8]

7. Cf. *VBh* 118.
8. Cf. *SpKā* I.22.

> When their real nature is known, then these very mental states (such as anger, delusion, etc.) bring about, by the means referred to (viz. *khecarī-samatā*) liberation in life itself. — p. 41

Psychological observation and spiritual experience show that any emotion at the point of its arising is still in a state of *nirvikalpa*, before it is manifested externally:[9]

> This is what is meant by the knowledge of their (i.e. the states of desire, anger, etc.) real nature. These states of anger, etc. at the time of their arising are of the form of *nirvikalpa*, i.e. they are sheer energy of the divine. — p. 41

Khecarī being the collective energies of the Supreme Lord, she contains all experiences, emotions, which are nothing but the rays of the Sun of Consciousness:

> Even the states of anger, etc., exist because of their identity with the wondrous play of the (divine) consciousness, otherwise their very existence would be impossible. The divine sense-goddesses themselves carrying out the various plays (of life) are like the rays of Śiva-sun. The sense-divinities by combining among themselves become of innumerable sorts. — p. 40

Abhinavagupta demonstrates this concretely with the example of sexuality which he analyses psychologically and physiologically, with the two concepts: *ojas*, vital energy, and *vīrya*, which has to be applied to both sexes as the sexual power.

> Now whatever enters the inner psychic apparatus or the outer senses of all beings, that abides as sentient life-energy (*cetanarūpeṇa prāṇātmanā*) in the middle channel, i.e. *suṣumnā* whose main characteristic is to enliven all the parts of the body. That life-energy is said to be *ojas* (vital lustre), that is then diffused as an enlivening factor in the form of common sexual power (*vīrya*) in all parts of the body. Then when an exciting visual or auditory perception enters the percipient, then on account of its exciting power, it fans the flame of passion in the form of the agitation of the sexual power.
> — p. 42[10]

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9. Cf. *VBh* 96, 97, 101.

10. J. Singh translates *vīrya* as "seminal energy," which limits it to the male only, whereas both sexes are meant, hence the translation "a sexual power."

All sense-experiences are related to this vital energy, so here too the interconnectedness of all things (*sarvaṁ sarvātmakam*) is applied:

> Since everything is an epitome of all things for all people, even memory or idea of a thing can surely bring about agitation because of the excitement of innumerable kinds of experiences like sound, etc. lying subconsciously in the omnifarious mind. — p. 42

What applies to the excitement of love equally applies to aesthetic experience, both having ultimately as "source of its pleasure the supreme I-consciousness full of creative pulsation, beyond the range of space and time, of the nature of perfect Bhairava-consciousness, the absolute sovereignty, full of the power of bliss" (p. 43).[11] It is again the intensity of the sense excitement which gives the sensibility for beauty: *sahr̥dayatā*.

> Excessive delight is possible only to those whose heart is expanded by sexual energy which has the boundless capacity to strengthen sensibility and which is established in them by repeated association with objects of enjoyment. — p. 43

> *adhikacamatkārāveśa eva vīryakṣobhātmā sahr̥dayatā nayate . . .*
> — p. 16, ll. 14-15

Since experiences in the realm of the senses, whether sexual or aesthetical, are not only blissful but can turn into pain or grief, even the intensity of despair (as on the death of a loved one) can suddenly be transformed into joy (p. 44).

All these experiences — blissful or painful — partake in the Śakti who resides as *kuṇḍalinī* in the body, and who is ever in union with Śiva. What happens in such an intense experience is that the two breaths, inbreath and outbreath, get dissolved in the central vein:

> When there is the dissolution of *prāṇa* and *apāna* (*marudādi*) in *suṣumnā* which, as the central channel, is full of the storage of the energy of all the senses, then one's consciousness gets entry into that stage of

11. Skt. p. 16, ll. 5-7 : *vīryavikṣobha ca vīryasya svamayatvena abhinnasyāpi adeśakāla-kalitaspandamaya-mahāvimarśarūpameva paripūrṇabhairava-saṁvidātmakaṁ svātantryamānanda śaktimayaṁ sukhaprasavabhūḥ* |

> the great central *suṣumnā* channel where it acquires union with the pulsation of one's Śakti (*nijaśakti-kṣobhatādātmyaṁ*), then all sense of duality dissolves, and there is the perfect I-consciousness generated by the abundance of the perfection of one's own inherent Śakti. Then by one's entry into the union of Śiva and Śakti (*rudrayāmalayogānupraveśena*) which consists in the bliss of their essential nature of manifestation, and by one's complete integration with the expansive flow of the energy of the great *mantra* of perfect I-consciousness, there is the manifestation of the *akula* or *anuttara* (absolute) Bhairava-nature, which is beyond all differentiation (*nistaraṅga*), unalterable and eternal (*dhruvapadātmaka*). — p. 44

Even the bliss of sexual union is actually a participation in the Divine union of Śiva and Śakti and it does not depend on the body. It can be experienced in actual physical union or in memory. In confirmation he quotes the *Parātrīśikā* and *Vijñāna Bhairava*.

What this excursus on the relation between the sexual energy and the *khecarī* implies is this: All sense-experiences are ultimately connected with or derived from the all-encompassing Divine Energy, and if they are experienced in a state of harmony or oneness (*samatā*), not of alienation or disturbance (*vaiṣamya*), they lead to the very state of *khecarī-samatā*. Nothing is excluded from that consciousness.

The examples given from the field of emotions and sexuality are important because they link the levels of psychology and physiology with the Ultimate:

> Therefore, homogeneousness (*sāmya* or *samatā*) of the *khecarī-śakti* constitutes liberation. This homogeneousness (sameness) of the *khecarī-śakti* is due to the awareness of the essential nature of the *anuttara* (i.e. the unsurpassable, Absolute Reality) which is constantly present and which arises from the bliss of the recognition of the completion of the union of the divine Śakti with Śiva, and acquires stability by the realisation of the consciousness of bliss of both (*ubhayavimarśānandarūḍhi*). — p. 42

From the entire argument it becomes clear that there are basically only two states of the human being in relation to Divine Consciousness: a state of alienation,

imbalance, disturbance, disharmony (*vaiṣamya*),[12] which is due to inattention, limitation of the I-consciousness (*āṇava*), and a state of unity, harmony, equality with the *khecarī-śakti*.

The movement from the one to the other, from the bondage of the limited subject to the total freedom of Divine Consciousness is simply described by the Tantra (verse 1) as: *yena vijñātamātreṇa*, "by mere recognition of this (*Anuttara*)."

Leaving aside the different interpretation by Abhinavagupta, the quotation given from Somānanda's *Śivadṛṣṭi* may suffice to explain this kind of knowledge:

> *ekavāraṁ pramāṇena śāstrādvā guruvākyataḥ* ।
> *jñāte śivatve sarvasthe pratipattyā dṛdhātmanā* ॥
> *karaṇena nāsti kṛtyaṁ kvāpi bhāvanayāpivā* ॥
> — VII.5-6

> Having once known the all-pervading Śivahood by a firm conviction through reasoning, scripture and the word of the *guru*, there is nothing to be done any more by means of spiritual practice involving *karaṇa* and *bhāvanā*.

A Comparative Note

I have translated *samatā/sāmya* by "harmony," unlike other translations such as "equality, sameness, uniformity, etc." The Greek *harmonia* has music as its basic metaphor. The great philosopher and mystic Plotinus (CE 204/5-270), who has influenced the entire tradition of Platonism and Christian mysticism, has expressed a state of harmony which comes so close to the concept of *khecarī samatā* that I am inclined to quote it, since it can throw light on the state that is meant also by Abhinavagupta. In *Ennead* III.6 he writes, in the context of defining virtue and vice:[13]

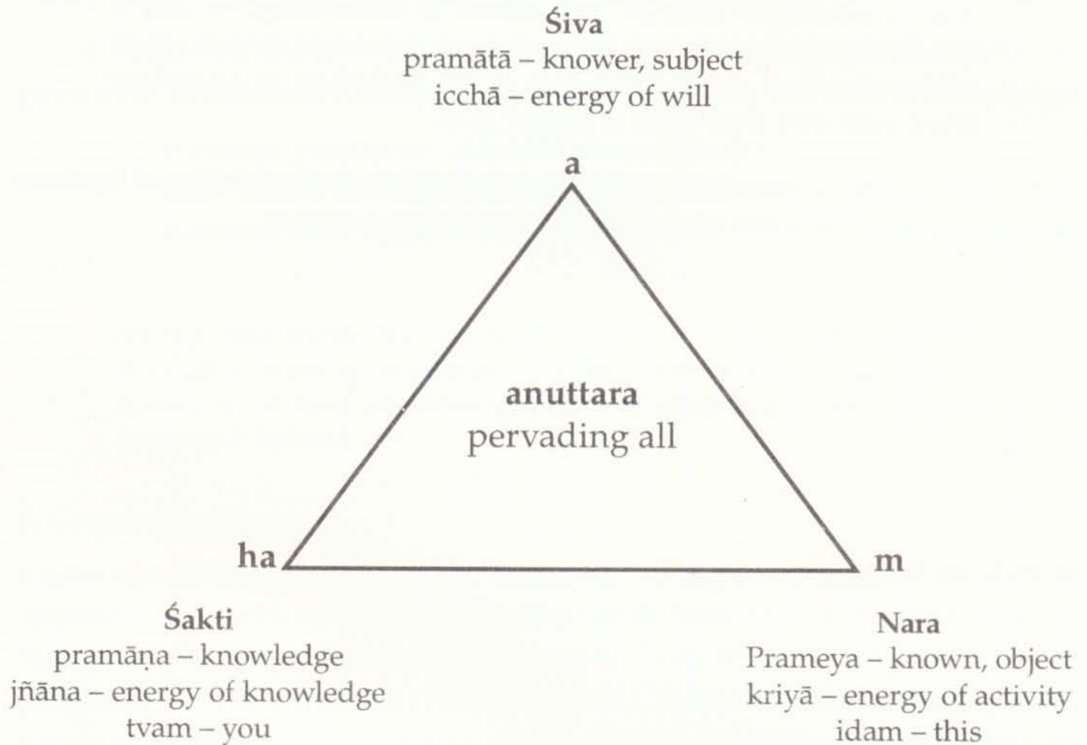
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12. In Latin the best translation would be *dissimilitudo*, in metaphysics the worldly realm is described by the scholastics as *regnum dissimilitudinis*, "the reign of dissimilarity or alienation."

13. Translated by A.H. Armstrong, in his edition of Plotinus (Loeb Classical Library), Plotinus, *Ennead* III, Harvard University Press, 1967, rpt. 1993, p. 213.

> Now if we say that "virtue is harmony" and vice lack of harmony, should we be expressing an opinion that accords with the views of the ancients, and would the statement contribute something of no small value to our investigation? For if the natural harmony of the parts of the soul with each other is virtue, and their disharmony vice, then there would be nothing brought in from outside, or from another source, but each part would enter into the harmony just as it is, or would not enter in, and remain in disharmony, because it was the sort of thing it was; just as dancers dance, and sing in accord with each other . . . so there, too, in the soul there is a harmony when each part does what is proper to it.

Both Plotinus and Abhinavagupta aim at a non-dualistic understanding of harmony and its opposite, with the ethical implications derived from it.



Trika: Triadic Relationships

5

The Three Grammatical Persons and Trika

IT is a well-known fact that for Indian philosophers Sanskrit grammar has played a paradigmatic role and has served not only as a hermeneutic device, but also as the model for understanding reality.[1] The "close link between thought and language" and the importance of "linguistic and grammatical speculation . . . (which is) unequalled in any other culture"[2] has been studied by many scholars[3] and has been often contrasted with the Western model,[4] based on mathematics and geometry. "The philosopher's frequent adoption of the grammarian's modus operandi,"[5] which applies to most of Indian philosophical literature, has been particularly important in the context of the thinkers and authors of non-dualistic Śaivism of Kashmir.

The metaphysical background for the interrelationship between language and reality is the doctrine of the interconnectedness of all things (*sarvātmakatva*). "*Sarvaṁ sarvātmakam*" means that the whole is present in each part, that all is related to all, that "all is made of all. No reality may be said to be separate and self-contained, since everything is pervaded by a single nature, *śivatā* (as Somānanda insistently repeats in the *Śivadṛṣṭi*) or the Power. Thus there do not really exist

1. Cf. also Betty Heimann, *Facets of Indian Thought*, esp. ch. XI. *Indian Grammar and Style*, pp. 154-77.
2. Cf. R. Torella, "Examples of the Influence of Sanskrit Grammar on Indian Philosophy", in: *East and West*, vol. 27 (Dec. 1987), pp. 151-52.
3. To mention only: L. Renou, D.H.H. Ingalls, F. Staal, A. Padoux, R. Torella.
4. Cf. D. Seyfort Ruegg, "Mathematical and Linguistic Models in Indian Thought: The Case of Zero and Śūnyatā", in: *WZKS*, vol. XXII, 1978, p, 171.
5. R. Torella, art. cit., p. 154.

separations or confines of any kind, there is nothing that remains definitively excluded from this circulation of the dynamism of Consciousness."[6]

Abhinavagupta finds the ideal paradigm for establishing the reality of the Triad of Trika: *Śiva-Śakti-Nara* in the grammatical as well as psychological structure of the three persons:

I — you — he/she/it

aham — *tvam* — *tat* (*idam, saḥ, sā*)

The exegetical context is the explanation of the address of Bhairava to the Devī (v.3a): *śr̥ṇu devi* . . .. First he goes into the aspect of hearing: "The highest goddess hears everything. Abiding as she does in the form of the power of hearing, she has that sovereign power (*svātantrya*) which consists in effecting congruous and suitable connection by blending all sounds in a meaningful whole."[7]

The next starting point for interpretation is the vocative, "O Goddess!," and hence the fact that Śiva in the first person addresses Devī in the second person, as a "thou." Here follows both the grammatical and psychological proof for Trika:

> Everything in the universe consists of the triad. That, which is only confined to itself (as an object), is insentient and comes chiefly under the category of *nara*, as for instance, "the jar is lying (on the ground)." The above has reference only to the third person (*prathama puruṣa*) which is left to be supplied after the first and second person (*śeṣaḥ*).
> — tr. p. 70

In the continuation of this passage Abhinavagupta is aiming at overcoming the dichotomies (we could also say "trichotomies") usually attached to the three grammatical persons, and he does it by showing the fluidity of the usage of the personal pronouns, as they are interconnected and flow one into the other. However, although the flow can be in any direction, ideally it is from below upwards, from the third, inert, person, to the second and finally to the first person: *aham*. However, passing through the second person is necessary in both ways: from the third person (object) to the first (subject), and vice versa.

6. Torella, art. cit., p. 155.

7. Jaideva Singh, tr., p. 68.

The grammatical structure of the vocative provides the occasion for analysing the second person in relation to the first:

> That which appears even as "this," when addressed, becomes completely enveloped with the I-feeling of the addressor. The "this" which is different from the addressor, when addressed as "you," becomes a form of *Śakti*. In "you are standing" this is the meaning of the second person, and the principle of addressing, viz. as I am standing, even so "this is standing." Ordinarily, the I (*ahaṁbhāva*) of the other person is different from the "I" of the person who is to be addressed, but in the process of addressing, the addressor assimilates the delightful autonomy of the addressed characterised by I-feeling to his own, and considering it as identical with the uninterrupted delight of his own I-feeling starts addressing him. In this light, he is addressing him in the true sense of the second person. This sense in which the addressor and the addressed, though different, become one in the act of addressing is indicative of the *parāparā* goddess (whose characteristic is identity-in-diversity). — pp. 70-71

The entire argument rests on the importance given to the (absolute, ultimate) "I" in the system of Trika and Pratyabhijñā, developed most vigorously by Utpaladeva,[8] who states in his *Ajaḍapramātṛ Siddhi*:

> *prakāśasyātmaviśrāntirahaṁbhāvo hi kīrtitaḥ* ||
> *uktā saiva ca viśrāntiḥ sarvāpekṣānirodhataḥ* |
> *svātantryamatha kartṛtvaṁ mukhyamīśvaratāpi ca* ||

> The resting in the self of the pure Light is called I-consciousness. It is called "repose" because it is free from all dependency and independent of any other agency or lordship. — vv. 22cd-23

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8. Cf. Torella, Introduction to *Īśvarapratyabhijñā Kārikā*, p. XXIX: "Utpaladeva is one who chose to use this word (i.e. *aham*), regardless of the associations generally attached to it in Indian thought, being aware of the fact that the risk of reification that has always weighed heavily on the word *ātman* was even more negative, and that this makes it less suitable for expressing the unpredictable overflowing of the divine personality. The term "I" is implicitly aimed against the two conceptions that are, after all, closest to the Pratyabhijñā and which it most aspires to differentiate itself from: the consciousness devoid of a subject of the Vijñānavāda and the static *ātman-Brahman* of the Vedānta."

And he adds in his own *Vṛtti*:

> It (the absolute) is established in consciousness (*saṁvit*), therefore it is a repose in nothing but the own being of consciousness; and this is (precisely) called the "I-feeling" (*ahaṁbhāva*) of the nature of the awareness of the fullness of the "I."

In the *Vivaraṇa*, Abhinavagupta supports this pre-eminence with reference to the *Bhagavad-Gītā*:

> In the freedom of the uninterrupted delight of I-consciousness completely independent of any reference to anything else, expressed in the form "I am standing," it is in every respect (*sarvathā*) the revered *parā* (highest) *śakti* that is at work. In that lies the pre-eminence of the first person. As it has been said, "Since I transcend the perishable and also the imperishable, therefore, am I known as the highest *puruṣa*, i.e. as the first person." — *BhG*, XV, 18[9]
>
> Here the verb *asmi* (am) has been used with reference to "I," the first person, to indicate its pre-eminence over both the perishable and the imperishable. — p. 71

But the possible misunderstanding in confusing the ultimate "I" with the limited I-consciousness (*mita-pramātṛ*) has to be removed immediately:

> Here in every case, it is not the limited I identified with the body that is referred to. The limited I (identified with the body) being an object of the senses is obviously incompatible with that (the real, unlimited I). Thus this (i.e. unlimited) I is of the nature of the self-luminous Śiva. Therefore of the (universal, unlimited) Consciousness (*bodha*) which is self-luminous, there is neither any diminution nor augmentation. Both diminution and augmentation being of the

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9. Abhinavagupta's commentary on this verse in his *Gītārthasaṁgraha* is revealing in this context.

Cf. also *BhG* XV.15: *sarvasya cāhaṁ hṛdi sanniviṣṭho mattaḥ smṛtirjñānamapohanam ca* | And Abhinavagupta's commentary: "I am the heart (*hṛdaya*) of all knowables such as a jar, etc. That heart is of the nature of consciousness of freedom (*svātantrya*), which contains within itself all objects. In that heart, *vimarśa* takes the form of *aham*. And from that *vimarśa* emerges knowledge in the form of *mahāsṛṣṭi*, which is that which did not exist before." (tr. Boris Marjanovic, p. 305).

> nature of *aprakāśa* cannot be an aspect of the Light of Consciousness (lit. cannot enter consciousness). The middle state which is only relative to the state of diminution and augmentation is also nothing. Therefore the notion of I, which is inseparable from the universal consciousness of Śiva (*tadbodhāvicchedarūpa*) and free from all relativity is not applicable to situations of augmentation, diminution, and the middle state between these indicated by thisness, i.e. objectivity and absence of objectivity. — p. 71

This classification is not only of philosophical importance, it has far-reaching consequences as well in the psychological and social fields. There it is mostly not the true, i.e. spiritual "I" which operates, but the *ahaṁkāra*, the artificial (*kṛtrima*) ego which clashes with other egos, as long as they have not realised their essential oneness in the universal I (*pūrṇāhantā*). Psychologists know exactly what is meant by the diminution or augmentation of the I as ego: the first leading to depression and loss of self-confidence; and the second leading to maniacal and egocentric behaviour. Both are obviously far removed from the true central I-consciousness or *ahaṁbhāva*.

But the I-thou is not denied as a real personal relationship. In fact, the first and second persons are so close to each other as grammar has laid it down (not only in Sanskrit but practically in all languages):[10]

> The notion of "you" i.e. the second person which, though indicative of separateness, is actually similar to that of "I." "Therefore both you and I are described as genderless" (i.e. they are used for both genders). The application of number, etc., i.e. dual and plural of these words according to the usage depending on the enumeration or difference of the body is appropriate from the point of view of *parāparā śakti* in the dual and *aparā-śakti* in the plural. The difference determined by the *śakti* of the Divine freedom is considered as one in the case of several bodies which can be traced in such usages as "we two, you two, we all, you all." — pp. 71-72

Augmentation, etc. being associated with the body cannot be even figuratively

10. In German the verb *sein* (to be) is declined as: *ich bin* — *du bist* — *er ist*, where the second person (*du*) combines the first and the third: *bi(n)+ist=bist*. (I owe this idea to Arindam Chakravarti).

employed in the case of consciousness, for diminution and augmentation cannot be reasonably applied to consciousness.

But if we speak of interpersonal relationship at the level of I-you, what about the (so-called) third person which is considered to be insentient (*jaḍa*)?

> "Everything is an epitome of all." According to this universal principle, even the insentient third persons (*narātmano jaḍa api*) shedding their insentiency can become entitled to [share in] the use of second and first person (*śakti-śaivarūpabhājo bhavanti*), for instance, in "listen, O mountains," the third person has been treated as second person, in "of mountains, I am Meru,"[11] the third person has been treated as the third person. The second person which pertains to *śakti*, can be shedding its *śakti* character, acquire the aspect of the third person, for instance, in "you whose fear has vanished, are fortitude (lit. the power of fortitude) itself," "you" not being used as a form of address has appropriately acquired the aspect of the third person. Usage like *bhavān* (you) with particular, subsequent use of words like *pādaḥ, guravaḥ* (revered one) which are used only in the case of another person, being used as third person which is characteristic of *nara* is fairly recognised. The second person also which is characteristic of *śakti*, shedding its particular use acquires the aspect of first person which is characteristic of Śiva, for instance, "O dear friend (female friend), O loved one, thou art I" is an accepted usage. The first person characteristic of Śiva, shedding its aspect of first person which is *cit*, also betakes to the aspect of the third person characteristic of *nara*, or second person characteristic of *śakti*. In the following expressions, "Who am I?" "this one am I," "O I," "Fie to me," "O to me" etc. the uninterrupted autonomy of I is subdued, and it is chiefly the separate "this one" that becomes predominant. In such a case, it is as if separateness characteristic of *aparā śakti*, in other words, *nararūpa* or third person that becomes prominent. In "O I," etc., Śiva contacts the throb of *parāparā śakti* (i.e. enters the sphere of second person). But in such cases, the preceding state acquires the succeeding state without transgressing its previous nature. Thus the third person characteristic of *nara* can clearly mount to the stage of the second (the Śakti stage) and even to the first

11. *Bhagavad-Gītā* X.23.

> person (i.e. Śiva stage) but the contrary course of mounting cannot be admissible. — pp. 72-73

The entire argument of this passage is based on the usage of language in which the three persons flow and get merged into one another. This implies personal relationships even with things — again a common psychological phenomenon — and it implies objectifying the subjective and subjectifying the objective experience.

Among the many identifications of Kṛṣṇa with the most eminent among any group of things or persons in the *Gītā*,[12] Abhinavagupta has here given only an example, but in fact the entire procedure of identification with the (Divine) "I" illustrates the same principle of transforming the inert third person into the all-encompassing first person, passing through the second. The "it," "he" or "she" becomes personified as a "you" and is then assumed into the "I," the true subject. In terms of Trika, Nara becomes personalised as Śakti and internalised in Śiva.

The identification of the "I" of Kṛṣṇa with different objects also reveals another aspect, that of symbolisation. The "I" or self is after all only experienced in one's own interiority, as Abhinavagupta along with many other Indian philosophers stresses. Even in the most abstract of thinkers, e.g. in Vedānta, the self (*ātman*) is expressed by a number of images, most of them taken from the Upaniṣads.[13] Thus the grammatical abstraction is filled with symbols and images of the "I," and these images are again a third person assumed into the first.

In terms of Trika we have seen that the first person is at the level of Śiva, of Parā-Śakti; the second person is at the level of Śakti and of Parāparā-Śakti, and the third person at the level of Nara and Aparā (see table). Obviously, Śakti and Parāparā are mediating between the third and the first person, both ways.

The grammatical argument for Trika is further strengthened by referring to the numbers: singular for Śiva, dual for Śakti, plural for Nara.

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12. *Bhagavad-Gītā* X.21-38. It is surprising that Abhinavagupta, in his commentary on the *Gītā* (*Gītārthasaṁgraha*) does not use this text for a commentary in the sense of the absolute "I." In the end (on verse 42) he only stresses the implicit non-duality of these statements (cf. tr. p. 236).

13. Cf. T. Goudriaan, "Imagery of the Self from Veda to Tantra", in: *The Roots of Tantra*, eds. K.A. Harper and R.L. Brown, SUNY Press, Albany, 2002, pp. 171-92.

> Each of this triad, without giving up its nature, becomes of three forms, viz. singular (Śiva-*bhāva*), dual (Śakti-*bhāva*) and plural (*nara-bhāva*). It has been said,
>
> "One thing becomes dual, and after becoming dual, it becomes plural." Of one and the same thing, when it is only one, then it connotes the nature of Śiva, since there is no other as counterpart. When there is a counterpart, then it is the nature of Śakti. In the case of many denoting difference, there is the nature of *nara*. Thus we have *ghaṭaḥ*, one jar denoting oneness, and thus Śiva-*bhāva, ghaṭau*, two jars, denoting Śakti-*bhāva, ghaṭāḥ*, many jars, denoting the aspect of *nara*. In a copulative compound (*dvandva samāsa*) in which the members, if uncompounded, would be in the same case and connected by the conjunction "and," we have an example of many things forming a sort of unity, thus denoting Śiva, e.g. *ghaṭapaṭapāṣāṇāḥ* (jar, cloth, stones). In a verb also, e.g. *tiṣṭhati* (one is standing or sitting) denotes Śiva: *tiṣṭhataḥ* (two are standing or sitting) denotes Śakti, *tiṣṭhanti* (many are standing or sitting) denotes *nara*. In fact, the entire manifestation is the expansion of *kriyāśakti* brought about by the one alone (i.e. by Śiva). As has been said:
>
> "By reducing the many (i.e. the *nara-rūpa* and *śakti-rūpa* to the one (i.e. Śiva-*rūpa*) who is there who will not be liberated from bondage?"
>
> Therefore, when the third person (*nara*), the second person (Śakti) and the first person (Śiva) are used together, simultaneously, there is the absorption of the lower in the higher and higher, because it is the higher that contains the truth of the lower, e.g. in *sa ca tvaṁ ca tiṣṭhathaḥ* (he and you are standing), the number of the verb *sthā* (to stand) is used in the second person which indicates that the third person (*nara*) has been absorbed in the second (*śakti*). In *sa ca tvaṁ ca ahaṁ ca tiṣṭhāmaḥ* (he, you and I are standing), the verb *tiṣṭhāmaḥ* which is the plural number of the verb in the first person has been used even for the third and the second person which is indicative of the fact that the third and second person are absorbed in the first.
>
> — pp. 73-74

The pre-eminence of oneness over multiplicity, and of pure subjectivity over objectivity, reflects the non-dual nature of the Trika system.

If language is a mirror of (metaphysical) reality, it cannot be confined to Sanskrit

alone, and Abhinavagupta is quite conscious of it in making the observation as under:

> It is only this state of complete understanding, the essence of the residual traces of the innate, perfect I-consciousness which is followed by the grammarians in their descriptive rules. Similarly, even in local dialects, e.g. the language (e.g. Pāli) used by the Buddhists or used in Āndhra or Draviḍian region, this manner alone of speech and meaning (lit. expressed by words) which originally follows the instinctive feeling of the heart, conveys by its delightful impression this form (viz. the form of *nara*, Śakti and Śiva) or understanding. — p. 74

Abhinavagupta summarises his insight into the importance of language by quoting himself (a fragment not traced in his published works), in the incomplete version of the KSTS edition:

> *. . . na hr̥dayaṁgamagāminī gīḥ*

reconstructed by Swami Lakshman Joo to:

> *na sā gīryā na hr̥dayaṁgamagāminī*[14]

and translated by Jaideva Singh as:

> That is no speech which does not reach the heart directly. — p. 74

He then sums up the entire argument in terms of Trika:

> So in every way, this kind of comprehension is innate. As has been said: "Without the form of *nara*, Śakti and Śiva (*tair*), there is neither word, nor meaning, nor mental movement."
>
> In *Mālinīvijayatantra* also, it has been said:
>
> As the one Śakti of Śiva (*śambhoḥ śaktirekaiva śāṅkarī*) abides, presiding over the entire class (of words, in first, second and third person), even so has she been related unto you. — III, 34
>
> In *Tantrasamuccaya* also, it is said:

14. As contained in the text ed. by J. Singh, p. 27. Gnoli translates the first version by: "La parola rivela il cuore" (the word reveals the heart), p. 49.

> This universe is established always and is in every way involved in third person (*nara*), second person (Śakti) and first person (Śiva) both in the dealings of worms and the all-knowing.
>
> Thus this universe consisting of the bearer of third, second and first person designations (*nara-śakti- śivātmakam*) has been explained according to the teaching of the traditional clear comprehension. This all-inclusive order of experience (*sarvaṁsahaḥ pratipattikramaḥ*) consisting of the third, second and first persons has been manifested by the free will of the highest Lord. — p. 74

On the strength of the argument from grammar Abhinavagupta succeeds in showing the interdependence of the three categories of Trika, but also their ultimate identity in the pervasive nature of the Divine Subject. He concludes with his characteristic self-irony, trying to stop himself from any further elaboration:

> So enough of elaboration of a topic which can appeal to the hearts of only a few people who have received the teaching from a *guru*, who are of refined taste, who are well-read (lit. who have heard from the learned people a great deal), and who have been purified by the descent of the Supreme grace. So, "listen, O goddess" has been explained. — p. 74

We find a wonderful theistic confirmation of the validity of the argument of the three persons and corresponding personal pronouns in Kṣemarāja's commentary on Utpaladeva's *Śivastotrāvalī* (III.14):

uttamaḥ puruṣo 'nyo 'sti
yuṣmatccheṣaviśeṣitaḥ |
tvaṁ mahāpuruṣastveko
niḥśeṣapuruṣāśrayaḥ ||

> The "first person" is distinguished from the "second person"
> and from the "third person" as well.
> You alone are the Great Person,
> the refuge of all persons. — Tr. Bailly
>
> Commentary: It is well-known that Hari (Viṣṇu) is the Supreme Person (*puruṣottama*): He is characterised as second person (and the other grammatical persons) — by "you" — in the case of (all) the subjects who are the superintending (persons) of the non-

differentiated essence of all knowledge, being attained through the essential nature of another superintending self — this is well-defined.

Thus the Āgama also says: "He is called Viṣṇu by the Vaiṣṇavas."

"You are the Great Person, because of your being the support (substratum) of all persons, from Sakala up to Sadāśiva."[15] By the word "other" he implies a different meaning. "One" means "non-dual." This is one meaning of the verse.

On the other hand, according to the grammatical method, that which is the first person in the sense of *asmad*, he is characterised as second and third person, i.e. he becomes differentiated. He (i.e. *Mahāpuruṣa*) is special because, reflecting on the isolated first person, due to its inclination, it has the sense of the second person. That which is the support (substratum) of all persons is the state of repose.

Having reflected on the objectivity of everything, and resting only in subjectivity, as when one wants to say: "he cooks, you cook and I cook," one expresses it by saying: "we cook" one should notice that in such a (grammatical) usage, this is the intended meaning. For you are the support (substratum) of all persons, i.e. the first, second and third persons, being of the nature of unconditioned consciousness underlying all conditioned persons.

Therefore, when there is the reflective awareness "that is seen by me, that was seen by me," "this," "that," the two elements though divided into perceiving subject and perceived object are manifested within the (true) cogniser (*pramātṛ*, subject).

— *Īśvarapratyabhijñā Kārikā* I.4.8 (tr. Torella)

Therefore (you alone are) Mahāpuruṣa, the Great Lord, because, like Mahādeva, the word *mahat* is applied to you only.

Besides using the same argument as Abhinavagupta does, namely, that the collective plural of the first, second and third person takes the form of the first person plural, thus indicating the pre-eminence of the first person, what is significant in the passage above is the statement about the *Mahāpuruṣa* being *uttama puruṣa* and

15. I.e. all the subjects, from the limited individual up to the level of Sadāśiva in the scale of the *tattvas*.

being the substratum of all persons. This is so because He alone is unconditioned consciousness, whereas all other persons are conditioned.

The whole theme has of course been elaborated by Utpaladeva in his *Īśvarapratyābhijñā Kārikā* and *Vṛtti*, and by Abhinavagupta in his commentaries, but this much may suffice to show the grammatical argument for establishing (a) the universality of Trika, and (b) the Divine, absolute "I" being pure Consciousness underlying all persons and their relationships.

The psychological, social and spiritual implications of these arguments for the distinctness as well as the interconnectedness of the three persons, based on grammatical usage, are far-reaching, because no person, no living being and even no inert thing is isolated, since their true relationship is located in the Divine I, the Consciousness underlying everything. Nothing is excluded, neither plurality nor the internal ontology of each person. Thus the closer a person comes spiritually to the central I-consciousness, abandoning the limited ego, the more he or she is connected and interconnected with the whole of reality: *sarvaṁ sarvātmakam*.[16]

Trika	**Śakti**	**persons**	**numbers**
Śiva	*Parā*	*ahaṁ*	singular
Śakti	*Parāparā*	*tvam*	dual
Nara	*Aparā*	*idam / saḥ / sā*	plural

16. A different, more historical and sociological approach to the notion of person and personhood has been elaborated by A. Sanderson in his article: "Purity and power among the Brahmins of Kashmir", in: *The Category of the Person*, eds. M. Carrithers, S. Collins, S. Lukes, Cambridge University Press 1985, pp. 190-216.

6

The Heart and the Resting Place of I-Consciousness

THE Heart (*hṛd, hṛdaya*) is a central symbol of both Tantra and *Vivaraṇa*. Calling it a symbol[1] indicates the multi-layered meanings which make it more pervasive than any other "concept" of the text, and in a sense, of the Trika and Parā traditions. Two of Abhinavagupta's *maṅgalaślokas* (v. 1 and 3) have already shown the depth of meaning (chapter one). The brief definition which Abhinavagupta gives in commenting on the word *hṛdayasthā* (*śakti*) in verse 2 of the question of the Devī shows the many layers of meaning. Here he analyses the adjective to Śakti in three parts: *hṛt — aya — sthā*:

> *Hṛt* is the supreme foundation of the nature of consciousness of all objective experiences like blue, etc. and subjective experiences like pleasure, etc. and also of the empirical experients conditioned by the body, *prāṇa* and *buddhi*. *Ayā* (plural of *aya*) means knowledge of manifold, varied objects like jar, cloth, etc. brought about by its own freedom. *Sthā* means this scintillating *śakti* abiding in them. So *hṛdayasthā* means the radiating Energy abiding in the knowledge of varied objects brought about by the supreme conscious base of all objective and subjective experiences and experients by its own freedom.
> — p. 61, tr. modified

> *sarvasya nīlasukhādeḥ dehaprāṇabuddhyādeśca paraṁ pratiṣṭhāsthānaṁ saṁvidātma hṛt . . .*
> — p. 21

The very dynamism of this explanation shows the inclusiveness and vastness of this conception of the Heart. Before going into a more detailed explanation with reference to other relevant texts, we may give a survey of the occurrences of *hṛd*/

1. In agreement with P. Muller-Ortega who has devoted a monograph on the Heart, with reference to the *Laghuvṛtti*.

hṛdaya in the Tantra itself:

Verse 2 :	*hṛdayasthā,* referring to the Śakti (as given above)
Verse 4 :	*mama hṛdvyomni* . . . Bhairava's answer: "in the space/ether of my heart."
Verse 10 :	*hṛdayaṁ bhairavātmanaḥ*: the heart of the nature of Bhairava
Verse 11 :	*hṛdayaṁ devadevasya*: the heart of the God of gods = the *mantra* called *hṛdayabīja* = SAUḤ
Verse 25 :	*hṛdayabījastham* . . . The *mantra* SAUḤ
Verse 27 :	*hṛdaya*: with reference to *nyāsa* performed on the parts of the body, hence the bodily location
Verse 35 :	*hṛtpadmāntargataṁ dhyāyet*: one should meditate on the inner space in the lotus of the heart.

Thus in the Tantra we find already several levels of meaning which Abhinavagupta is explaining in the commentary.

The Heart is introduced both by the question of the Devī in verse 2 and by the answer of Bhairava in verse 4. She introduces her question by addressing the Lord in very personal terms, in the *sūtra*:

etad guhyaṁ mahāguhyaṁ kathayasva mama prabho |

— p. 53

Abhinavagupta analyses *mahāguhyam* in two ways:

Tell me this secret, this great mystery, my Lord.
or:
Tell me this secret, this great unhidden one . . . , splitting in *mahā-a-guhyam.*

These two meanings again show the double nature of the revelation of the Tantra which is both hidden and also obvious, open for all.

guhyaṁ aprakaṭatvāt yato guhāyāṁ māyāyāṁ svarūpāparijñāyāṁ satyāṁ sthitam api aprakaṭam |
atha ca mahat aguhyaṁ sarvasya evaṁvidhacamatkāramayatvāt ||

— p. 18

> This is a secret mystery, because of its not being evident, for though it abides in *guhā* (cavern) or *māyā* in which the essential nature remains unknown, it is not evident. Moreover, it is largely unhidden, for it is known to everyone as the source of delight. (In its ultimate analysis), it is the goddess *śuddha-vidyā* herself who abides undivided in the different states of knower (subject), knowledge, and knowable (object). The three-cornered one, however, becomes in the state of *māyā*, percipient of differentiation which is excessively reflected therein. *Māyā* also, being the source of the emanation of the universe, is actually divine knowledge (*śuddha-vidyā* or *śiva-vidyā*) itself. Therefore, according to the principle enunciated, this *śuddha-vidyā* or divine knowledge, when not known in this aspect, is called *mahāguhā* (the great cavern), because of her being three-cornered in the form of knower, etc. (that appear as different) on account of her exalted state of non-differentiation being concealed from view. In the Trika Śāstra, she alone (viz. *śuddha-vidyā māyā*) is, actually, the object of worship as the three-cornered divinity. — pp. 53-54

Although Abhinavagupta equates *hṛdaya* with *māyā*, yet in the Upaniṣads *guhā* is a synonym for heart.[2] In the benedictory verse to his *Paramārthasāra*, Abhinavagupta invokes the Supreme (*param*) which is one and has entered many caverns, i.e. hearts: *ekaṁ niviṣṭaṁ bahudhā guhāsu.*[3] But here he takes *māyā* in the sense of *śuddha-vidyā* (the first *tattva* of the "pure" order in ascent) and as the source of manifestation (*mahāguhāyāṁ śuddhavidyamayyāṁ mahā-sṛṣṭirūpāyāṁ jagajjanmabhūmau sva-camatkārarūpeṇa bhavati*, p. 18). In a typical *nirvacana* word-play he takes *mahā* as the reversal of *aham*, hence *m-ha-a*.

> Now in this great cavern of *māyā,* whose heart is full of pure divine wisdom (*śuddha-vidyā*), which is the vast creative movement, the origin of the emergence of the entire universe, the return movement in the form of *ma-ha-a* that occurs by its own inherent dynamism of delight is, indeed, a great secret. By means of this secret it is intended to indicate that there is a return movement from objective manifestation indicated by *ma* (*nara*) and *ha* (*śakti*) towards the essential nature (of the Self), which ends in the repose of Self-consciousness, signifying thereby divine Freedom or in other words

2. Cf. *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* II.1.1; *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* I.14, II.20, III.1, etc., *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* II.1.10; III.1.7; *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* II.10, III.20; etc.

3. Cf. *The Paramārthasāra* by Abhinavagupta, KSTS, p. 2, Yogarāja comments on *guhāsu: rudrakṣetrajñarūpāsu hṛdguhāsu antarāviṣṭam*, p. 3.

> uninterrupted Bhairava-consciousness indicated by *a*. Of manifestation, the delightful form of the energy of the natural, innate *mantra* known as *parā vāk* (the Supreme divine utterance) is I (*ahaṁ*).

If *ahaṁ*, the central I-consciousness, is the abode of rest of all manifestation, *ma-ha-a* symbolises the return movement to the source of creation. He quotes Utpaladeva's *Ajaḍapramātṛ Siddhi*:

> The repose of all manifested phenomena in the Self is said to be I-consciousness (*APS* 22), i.e. the real I-feeling is that in which in the process of withdrawal, all external objects like jar, clothes, etc. being withdrawn from their manifoldness come to rest or final repose in their essential, uninterrupted *anuttara* aspect. This *anuttara* aspect is the real I-feeling (*ahaṁbhāva*).
> — pp. 54-55

The entire symbolism of the *aham* is contained in this brief commentary:

> In the process of expansion, the changeless, unsurpassable, eternal, reposeful venerable Bhairava, is of the form *a* which is the natural, primal sound, the life of the entire range of letter-energies (*sakalakalājāla-jīvanabhūtaḥ*). He in the process of expansion assumes the *ha* form (the symbol of Śakti), for expansion (*visarga*) is of the form of *ha*, i.e. Kuṇḍalinī Śakti, and then he expands into a dot (*bindu*) symbolising objective phenomena (*nara rūpeṇa*) and indicative of the identity of the entire expansion of Śakti (i.e. the entire manifestation) with Bhairava.
> — p. 55

Aham and *ma-ha-a* contain the three elements of Trika, which means the totality, and they represent the two movements of manifestation and withdrawal.

Coming to the interpretation of *mama hṛdaya-vyomni* in the answer of Bhairava, he defines *hṛdaya* as

> *mameti yat etat hṛdayaṁ sarvabhāvānāṁ sthānaṁ pratiṣṭhādhāma*
> — p. 29

> That which is my heart is the locus, foundational effulgent abode of all existing things.

All things exist because of having their foundation in consciousness:

> *First interpretation*: In *mamahṛdayavyoma*, *hṛdaya* means the receptacle of innumerable objects like blue, etc.; *vyoma* means that where the universe of

particular objects (*mamakārātmakaṁ viśvam*) is *vīta*, i.e. held wholly in an implicit manner in that ether which is devoid of all difference (*śūnyarūpaṁ*).

Second interpretation: *Mama* means "of the consciousness which expresses itself both in difference (*apara-saṁvitti*) and non-difference itself both in difference (*para-saṁvitti*)"; *hṛdayam* means the final resting place, i.e. I — *ahaṁ*. — p. 78

That the Supreme Goddess, Parā, Anuttarā, is herself the Heart is clearly stated in the *Tantrāloka*, linking up all the previously discussed concepts. In the translation by A. Sanderson:

So this universe is a reflection in the Lord, in the perfectly reflective void of Bhairava's consciousness, [and arises] under the influence of nothing outside [that consciousness]. This ability of the Lord to embody himself as the universe without drawing on anything outside [his own nature] is the supreme goddess that [our masters] call "creativity" (*pratibhāṁ*), "the feminine ultimate" (*anuttarāṁ*). It is the supreme Power of Universality (*kaulikī śaktiḥ*), the ability of this (*asya*) deity (*devasya*) [Bhairava] {embodied in the sound *a* (*akulasya*)} to manifest the universe (*kulaprathanaśālinī*) [though] {transcending it (*akulasya*)}, the power with which the Lord is ever one (*aviyukto yayā prabhuḥ*). The power of Bliss (*ānandaśaktiḥ*) [=*ā*] is the combination (*yāmalaṁ rūpam*) of these two, the "passionate embrace" (*saṁghaṭṭaḥ*) out of which the universe is emitted [into consciousness]. This is the [ultimate] reality beyond both the universe-transcending and the universal (*parāparāt paraṁ tattvam*). It is "the Goddess" (*devī*), "the Essence" (*sāram*) and "the Heart." It is the highest (*paraḥ*), omnipotent (*prabhuḥ*) state of absolute potential (*visargaḥ*). — *Tantrāloka* III.67-69 (In: *Sāmarasya*, p. 98)

And Sanderson summarises:

The heart that Abhinavagupta invokes as the source of inspiration and the goal to be realised is, then, the state of absolute potential (*visargaḥ*) in which the three powers of will, cognition, and action, and the three modes of plurality, synthesis, and non-duality, are fused in blissful, all-embracing consciousness. — Ibid., p. 98

The symbol of the heart cannot be separated from the ultimate or supreme I-consciousness, which is the power of the *mantra*: *mantra-vīrya* = *ahaṁ*. In the context of the *mantra* in *āṇavopāya* or the "individual means" in the *Tantrāloka*, Abhinavagupta calls it "the great Heart."

> The spontaneous "resonance" (*dhvani*) of this (consciousness) due to its nature of (universal) self-awareness (*parāmarśa*) is ever arisen — and this is called the "supreme, great Heart" (*paramaṁ hṛdayaṁ mahat*).
>
> — *TĀ* IV.181b-182a

> Jayaratha: This "resonance" arising spontaneously is of the nature of the Supreme Word (*parāvāgrūpā*) — it is the (cosmic and inner) sound (*nāda*) consisting of I-consciousness.

> This self-awareness (*svavimarśa*) which resides in the Heart in which the universe is completely dissolved is experienced at the beginning and at the end of any act of perceiving objects and it is designated as "universal vibration (of Consciousness)" (*sāmānyaspanda*) in the Śāstras. It is of the nature of an upsurge in one's own Self. — Comm. on IV.182b-183

Abhinavagupta does not let any occasion go without hinting at the experiential aspect, without which the description would be merely theoretical. Thus he hints at the occasions when this *svavimarśa* or *parāmarśa* can be experienced: at the moments when a sensation arises, or when it ends. The practical examples to fix the awareness on these moments are given in the *Vijñāna Bhairava*, e.g. the well-known verse 118, where even the moments at the start and ending of sneezing can become occasions for enlightenment. At these moments the *sāmānyaspanda* underlying every experience can be contacted.

Then follows the "definition" of *spanda*, the very dynamism of universal Consciousness:

> This (*spanda*) is a slight movement, *sphuraṇa,* scintillating, not dependent on any other. It is a wave in the ocean of Consciousness, and Consciousness cannot be without (waves).
>
> It is the nature of the ocean to be either waveless (calm) or with waves and other movements.
>
> (Thus) this (Heart or Self-awareness) is the essence (*sāra*), because this insentient universe has Consciousness as its essence (*citsāraṁ jaḍam jagat*), it depends on it, because (Consciousness) is its foundation, and its essence is the "great Heart" (*tatsāraṁ hṛdayaṁ mahat*). — *TĀ* IV.184-186a

What this dense passage indicates clearly is the inherent dynamism of the universal Heart, which is identical with self-awareness, with universal vibration, and hence

with the consciousness-nature of the whole of Reality. As we have noted in other passages, although other important concepts are used, the whole description leads up to the heart — as if it evoked more than such words as essence (*sāra*), consciousness (*saṁvit, cit*), and others do. This confirms again the symbol-character of the Heart: it is dynamic, pulsating, resounding, and yet still, it is the core (*sāra*), being the unifying "locus" of consciousness.

At the very end of his *Vivaraṇa*, Abhinavagupta sums up with a definition of the "supreme heart":

yatrāntarakhilaṁ bhāti yacca sarvatra bhāsate ।
sphurattaiva hi sā hyekā hṛdayaṁ paramaṁ budhāḥ ॥ — p. 99

That in which the whole universe shines and which shines (itself) everywhere, that scintillating Light is verily the One, Supreme Heart (say) the wise.

After giving the strange example of the copulation of a male and a female ass (taken from a Tantra), Abhinavagupta comes to mention the state of union experienced in the rising of *kuṇḍalinī* in the *suṣumnā*:

tathobhayamahānanda sauṣumṇahṛdayāntare ।
spandamānamupāsīta hṛdayaṁ sṛṣṭilakṣaṇam ॥ — p. 99

In the heart = in *suṣumnā*, there is the great bliss experienced by (the union of) both (expansion and contraction), meditate on that heart full of vibration, characterised by creation.

dhyāyansmaranpravimṛśan kurvanvā yatra kutracit ।
viśrāntimeti yasmācca prollaseddhṛdayam tu tat ॥ — p. 99

Whether meditating, remembering, reflecting
or acting in any way,
that in which everything comes to rest
and from where it arises,
that is the Heart.

Jayaratha identifies the spontaneously sounding *dhvani* with the Supreme Word, which is at the same time the inner sound of the nature of I-awareness: *haḥ khalu parāvāgrūpaḥ svarasadito dhvaniḥ — ahaṁparāmarśātmā nādaḥ* (*TĀ* vol. III, p. 827).

As the following passage shows, "the great Heart" is again identified with the heart-*mantra* SAUḤ (*TĀ* IV.186b-189a).[4] We shall come to that theme in the context of the core *mantra* (chapter nine).

But the symbol of the Heart is so powerful that it often comes at the end of a whole development as a matter of crowning, and in a way self-explanatory, expression. This is already the case with Utpaladeva's oft-quoted Kārikās in his *Īśvarapratyabhijñā Kārikā*.

> Consciousness has as its essential nature reflective awareness (*pratyavamarśa*); it is the supreme Word (*parāvāk*) that arises freely. It is freedom in the absolute sense, the sovereignty (*aiśvaryam*) of the supreme Self.
>
> *Vṛtti* : — This is the First Word (*ādyā vāc*), in which the expressible is undifferentiated, without beginning or end in that it is constituted by perpetual consciousness, autonomous. This is pure freedom, independent of any other reality, which has the name of "sovereignty." — 13 —
>
> It is the luminous vibrating (*sphurattā*), the absolute being (*mahāsattā*), unmodified by space and time; it is that which is said to be the heart (*hṛdayam*) of the supreme Lord, in so far as it is his essence.
>
> *Vṛtti* : — It is, by nature, luminous vibrating, it is the subject of this luminous vibrating; it is not to be understood as the counterpart of non-being (*abhāvāpratiyoginī*) [but] it also pervades non-being; it is existing, being, the subject of the action of being; permanent, because untouched by space and time. It is the power of the activity of consciousness, whose essence is reflective awareness. It constitutes the foundation of the self of the supreme Lord, who is all things; the various *āgama*s call it the "heart." — 14 —
>
> — tr. R. Torella[5]

The Supreme or the Divine Heart does not exclude the other levels of the heart as the seat of human emotions, as Abhinavagupta expresses in a beautiful verse:

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4. Cf. A. Sanderson, *The Visualization of the Deities of the Trika*, p. 57.

5. *The Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā* of Utpaladeva with the Author's Vṛtti, pp. 120-22.

> That which moves in the prior, intervening, and posterior state of the apprehension of all the objects of sense, which is universal (*nikhilātmakaṁ*), which is endowed with the splendour of the highest Śakti (*paraśaktibhāsi*), that indeed is the divine creative consciousness (*pratibhāṁ*). To one who is absorbed in that consciousness (*tasyāṁ pralīnavapuṣaḥ*), how can depression (*glāniḥ*) brought about by the lack of this divine consciousness ever occur?
>
> The ignorant man does not observe the magnitude of the delightful enjoyment of the most precious wealth (*paradhana-sukhāsvāda*) lying in the body, *prāṇa*, etc. and feels overwhelming depression in his heart. If the Supreme Goddess who feels particular relish in bringing into being the entire universe enters his heart, then O! She sportively functions as the full and final oblation (in reducing to ashes the depression that had been plaguing him). — p. 95[6]

The important meaning of *hṛdaya* in the context of the core *mantra* or *hṛdaya-bīja* will be treated separately (chapter 9).

I am not expanding on this topic, since P. Muller-Ortega has already collected the most important meanings and texts in his monograph *The Triadic Heart of Śiva*.[7]

The Possessive Pronoun: *Mama*

No possible doubt escapes Abhinavagupta's exegetical ingenuity. The simple, but very personal expression of the Devī: *mama prabho*, becomes the starting-point for a detailed analysis of the possessive pronoun. First of all, he splits *kathayasva* and interprets *sva* combined with *mama* as "my own Self" (addressed to the Lord). In ordinary parlance "the word 'mine' indicates an object related to a subject" (p. 65). But this relationship "rests in the essential nature of the Self," as confirmed by Utpaladeva in his *Ajaḍapramātṛ Siddhi* (p. 15). What is indicated by this and other quotations is the universalisation of the possessive pronoun: *Mama* means *viśvam*, i.e. the universe . . . (p. 56). Here he goes into the subtleties of spiritual experience,

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6. *yatprātibham nikhilavaiṣayikāvabodha-pūrvāparāntaracaraṁ nikhilātmakaṁ tat* ।
tasyāṁ pralīnavapuṣaḥ paraśaktibhyāsi glānirghaṭeta kimbhāvavaśopakḷptā ॥
śārīraprāṇādau paradhanasukhāsvādapaṭalamanālokya svasminspṛśati hṛdaye glānimasmām ।
praviṣṭā cedantarnikhilajagatīsūtisarasā parā devī hanta pravilasati pūrṇāhutiriva ॥ — p. 37

7. See Bibliography.

where *yogīs* of different schools, such as Sāṁkhya-Yoga and Buddhism, experience a state of *samādhi* in which the idea of "mine" disappears. But as soon as they come out of *samādhi*, the previous impression of their individuality reappears.

The ordinary and limiting idea of "mine" and "not mine" is expressed beautifully by Utpaladeva in his *Śivastotrāvalī*:

etanmama na tvidamiti
rāgadveṣādinigaḍadṛḍhamūle |
nātha bhavanmayataikya-
pratyayaparaśuḥ patatvantaḥ || — VII.2

"This is mine, this is not mine" -
All such feelings like attachment, aversion,
Let the axe of the insight into oneness with You, O Lord,
Fall at their root (and remove them).

In a verse from his own *stotra*, Abhinavagupta sums up the entire complexity of what "possession" or "non-possession" means:

> That thought, viz. "Nothing is mine" by which the senseless creatures are reduced to wretchedness incessantly, that very thought, viz. "Nothing is mine" means to me "I am everything." Thus I have attained a lofty position. — p. 57[8]

The lack of possession in the case of worldly beings is a curse of misery, but for the enlightened one it is the condition for his universality.

Abhinavagupta comes back to the interpretation of *mama* in the context of Bhairava's expression: *mama hṛdvyomni*, "in the space of my Heart" (v. 4), where it is again the universality of the Heart, of the space/ether, and of the "my" which is stressed: "*Vyoma* means that where the universe of particular objects is 'held' . . . " (p. 29, Skt. p. 78 tr.). *Mama* actually means that any objective experience belongs to the subject: *mameti yat etat hṛdayaṁ sarvabhāvānāṁ sthānaṁ pratiṣṭhādhāma . . . nīlādi rūpamiti pramātureva* (p. 29).

8. See Appendix for the own *stotras* quoted by Abhinavagupta.

What these different explanations of the possessive pronoun show is the following: In normal parlance, the possessive indicates limitation to the individual possessor, and non-possession is understood as a lack or poverty. In the case of *yogīs* who are on the way to overcoming their individuality and possessiveness, this happens only when they are in a state of *samādhi*. But in the context of *Anuttara*, of the Supreme Heart, even the possessive is an indication of the oneness with the ultimate I-consciousness, hence the movement is from *mama* to *aham*, and from *aham* to *ma-ha-a*.

7

From the Absolute to the Order of Manifestation

Anuttara to Kaulikasṛṣṭi

The Two Sections

ABHINAVAGUPTA devotes one third of his entire Commentary to only four verses, and the rest to 32 verses. The first part is centred on *Anuttara* and its entire metaphysical implications, the second part around *kaulikavidhi*, "the order of creation," which issues forth from *Anuttara*. According to one of the possible interpretations of *Anuttara*, the first part could be said to lead ultimately into silence, because no "answer" can be adequate in relation to the Absolute. The second part, being focused on *uttara*, on the other hand, goes into the entire field of Speech, Language and Mantra. Though he does not explicitly state it, yet the first part could be said to belong to the realm of *parā* and *paśyantī*, the transcendent and unexpressed states of the Word, and the second to the realm of *madhyamā* and *vaikharī* in all their dimensions.

The transition between the two parts is revealing. Here Abhinavagupta first justifies his interpretation over earlier, misleading commentaries (p. 83 tr.). He makes it clear that there is no duality of *anuttara* and *uttara* involved, since even the second part dealing with manifestation and with Language, is also nothing but *Anuttara*. He reiterates the threefold methodology for understanding reality:

> It has been said that it is the *anuttara* even of the posterior part of the book. It is for the explanation of all this that the Lord Bhairava proposes to devote the posterior part of the book with a desire for decisive ascertainment in detail for the sake of those pupils who have become adroit by acquiring the understanding of the

> knowledge of reality which is the essence (*niṣkarṣaṇa*) of the well-reasoned explanation of the *guru* (*yukti*), teaching of the traditional scripture (*āgama*) and personal experience (*svasaṁvedana*). — p. 83

Yukti, Āgama and *svasaṁvedana* could also be translated as true reasoning (like *sattarka*), revelation and own experience, these three complementing and strengthening each other.

He also states perspicuously that for advanced disciples the first part and the four verses explained therein are sufficient for attaining *jīvanmukti* and for entering the state of *Anuttara*.[1]

> Therefore, I proclaim with upraised arm that those who have been purified by firm conviction may rest contented with so much only. Now the other part of the book is begun for a thorough deliberation of the *kaulika* state inherent in the spotless mirror of *anuttara* who is the supreme Bhairava. — p. 84

The two parts are also called the *bimba* and *pratibimba* sections, because the second part contains the entire theory of reflection, the universe being a reflection in the Supreme Consciousness, besides the reflectivity of language and the cosmotheandric levels of reality (*tattvas*) developed in the second part.

Before moving on to the second part starting from verse 5, we must establish again the link between the first four verses of the Tantra containing the question and the beginning of the answer. As noted earlier, the Devī states the essential content of the Tantra in her very question. Similar to the opening of the *Vijñāna Bhairava*, the difference lies in the theoretical knowledge and its realisation in practice, which alone can give full satisfaction (*tṛpti*).[2] The rest of Tantra and Commentary is dedicated to unfolding the practice of *mantra* and ritual-transcending contemplation, which leads to the fulfilment of all desires (v. 36) and to omniscience. The satisfaction sought by the Devī is attained in the union of Rudra and Rudrā (v. 37). By participation in this very union the *yogī* or disciple reaches "the attainment of the transcendental state which means resting in one's essential self — this is the state of Bhairava" (p. 269) (*viśrāntirūpākulasattāsādane,* p. 102).

1. Cf. *anuttarapada* in the *Tantrāloka* in the context of the *upāyas*, quoted earlier.

2. Cf. *Vijñāna Bhairava,* v. 161: *devadeva mahādeva paritṛptāsmi śaṅkara.*

The concepts of *tṛpti* (satisfaction) and *viśrānti* (repose) are close in meaning, both indicating a state of fullness and fulfilment.[3] The one who, through the practice of the *mantra*, becomes identified with Śiva (*Parameśvara*) is also called *tṛptaḥ* (v. 24), fully satisfied.

In his *Mālinīvijayavārttika* Abhinavagupta uses the image of the bee, i.e. his mind, which finds pleasure in the fragrance of the lotus (*utpala*) of his grand-master, Utpaladeva (I.7). There he uses the expression:

> *yena-anuttararasasaṁbhogatṛptā me matiṣaṭpadī* — I. 9

> Through whom the bee of my mind gets full satisfaction by the bliss of the Absolute.

Only the *Anuttara* can bestow this satisfaction. A description of this state of contentment is related to the overcoming (literally "devouring") of time; as found in the *Śrīḍāmara Tantra*:

> This has been said by Śiva (*parameśa*) in the *Śrīḍāmara Tantra*: "After immobilising one's circle of rays and tasting the supreme nectar he should dwell in bliss within the present that is not divided from both past and future."
>
> — *Mālinīvijayavārttika*, I.155cd-156, tr. Hanneder, p. 85

Abhinavagupta summarises this in the dual *grāsatṛptī* (I.157), i.e. the devouring of time which dissolves all contraction (*saṅkoca*) and thereby leads to satisfaction.

The second part of the Tantra (vv. 5-9) is clearly marked by beginning with the word *atha*, "now," which is the beginning of all philosophical *sūtra*s and which refers to a continuity with a previous text or revelation. Abhinavagupta encounters the problem that with this word, and with the entire development of creation (*sṛṣṭi*) as well as phonematic manifestation (*varṇaparāmarśa*) the element of time comes in which, at the level of *Anuttara*, was said to be absent (*akālakalita*, "not limited by time" is an epithet of *Anuttara*). Therefore his first concern is to counter any possible misunderstanding of a temporal order: *krama* (as in vv. 6 and 8).

The unit of verses 5 to 9 of the Tantra summarises the manifestation of the phonematic universe, i.e. the procession of the phonemes of the Sanskrit alphabet

3. Cf. A. Chakrabarti, "The Heart of Repose, the Repose of the Heart", in: *Sāmarasya*.

corresponding to the levels of the *tattva*s, variously rendered as "elements," "categories," "principles" or "levels of reality" (S. Vasudeva). I prefer to translate it as "cosmotheandric element" (or "reality"), because they comprise the cosmic elements (the five *mahābhūta*s and the five *tanmātra*s or subtle elements), the human constituents like the five senses, mind, intellect and the ego, and various ascending levels of manifestation up to the Divine: Sadāśiva, Īśvara, Śakti, Śiva. We shall of course come to the homologies and correspondences of the *tattva*s with the elements of language that are the phonemes.

Before getting into technicalities of the *tattva*s and of language, the alphabet, etc. Abhinavagupta's philosophical concern is to establish the non-dualism of the *Anuttara* and its creation or manifestation. He does this both, by philosophical argument as well as by appealing to spiritual experience.

But before entering into this technical theme it will be helpful to quote Abhinavagupta's summary of the passage of connection which he gives in a single long sentence, not, as usual, in verse form:

> So, the goddess, the highest power of creative word (*parāvāk*) is of the form of all the letters, beginning with *a* and ending with *kṣa*, expands by enfolding within herself the venerable *parāparā* form, etc. inherent in *paśyantī*, etc. that are about to arise by her free will, has the essence of the creative delight which is identical with the consciousness of diverse manifestation consisting of all the elements, worlds and objects that have been undisputably brought about by being included in her progressive expansion, is of the nature of the highest Reality consisting of astonishing facts brought to light by the presence of Lord Bhairava, is the Supreme Creative Power that reveals within her pure mirror of Self endless manifestations, maintenance and absorption. — p. 96[4]

In this passage both the inclusiveness of the Supreme Goddess Word (*parāvāk*) and the levels of descent within the same Divine Reality are clearly expressed. The non-duality of the *Anuttara* and its creation *is* the Goddess *Parāvāk*. The implied

4. *tadgarbhākāravaśāvivādaghaṭita-sakalabhūta-bhuvanabhāvādipra-pañcaprabodhaikya-camatkārasārā parameśvarabhairavabhaṭṭārakāvirbhāvaprathitatathāvidhād-bhutabhūta-paramārthasvarūpā.* (p. 38, l.18-20)

symbolism is that of the creativity of the Supreme Goddess — twice the expression *garbhīkṛta/garbhīkāra* occurs with the image of the womb: She holds the entire creation in her cosmic womb. The only "cause" for bringing about the various stages of manifestation is Her very own freedom, autonomy (*svasvātantrya*). Being the Supreme Word, She is descending into the stages of *paśyantī*, *madhyamā* and *vaikharī*, containing all the elements of language, the phonemes, etc. Simultaneously She brings about the worlds, objects and external manifestation. Being Herself *mahāsṛṣṭi*, i.e. the totality of creation, She encompasses all the repeated phases of *sṛṣṭi*, *sthiti*, *saṁhāra*, past, present and future. But again, to avoid any dualistic interpretation, Abhinavagupta immediately adds that all these are only reflections in the pure mirror of Her consciousness, thus introducing the philosophical theme of *bimba-pratibimba* which underscores the whole of the second part. Thus in this passage the entire theme of the manifestation of both the universe and language is encapsulated. The entire creation is nothing but a revelation of the Supreme Lord (*parameśvarabhairavabhaṭṭāraka*), inseparably one with His creative power.

We may now come back to the themes marking the transition to the part concerned with *kaulika-sṛṣṭi*, the total manifestation.

As mentioned earlier, the first problem Abhinavagupta has to resolve, if he is to maintain the non-duality of the Absolute, is the problem of time. This surfaces in the very first word of verse 5: *atha*, and in the expression *kāla-yogena* of the same verse. *Atha* normally refers to a preceding matter and a succession. The only succession which he admits here is the difference between the teaching and the taught (*upadeśyaupadeśabhāvalakṣaṇo bhedaḥ*, p. 34), which is, however, revealed out of the freedom of the supreme Lord, and hence not subject to time.

He quotes the interpretation by Somānanda who makes a *nirvacana* of *atha* by identifying *a* with Śiva and *tha* with Śakti (p. 90). Since *tha* and *ha* have the same pervasiveness (*samavyāpti*), and *ha* also stands for Śakti, *atha* (now) refers to the initial surge (*prathamollāsa*) of any manifestation or experience. Interestingly, Abhinavagupta differs on the issue from his predecessor who, he admits, had access to other Āgamas which contain such an explanation. He expresses a subtle criticism of Somānanda when he refers to the power with which *mantra*s are written in symbolic scripts (*dhūlibhedādinā ca kalpitasāmayika lipi . . .*, p. 35), on the basis of

some Āgamas unknown to Abhinavagupta. This reference is also interesting in the sense that Abhinavagupta does not give any importance to scripts in relation to *mantras*, but primarily to sound (*nāda*). By offering his obeisance to Somānanda by whose teaching he has been purified (*tat-śāsana-pavitrita*), he differs from him on an important ground: he finds that such explanations going into imaginary interpretation, though based on some Āgamas, move too far away from a universally acceptable understanding of the text. His concern for universality, which we shall find in other contexts, is also visible.

> Subtle difference of meaning of the *mantra* depending on imaginary and symbolic interpretation of the letters of a word may be of use to some, but cannot be of use to pupils of all countries and all times. Therefore I have not described it in detail. Such an interpretation is of no use to those who have the benefit of personal experience and the rational explanation of the teachers. — p. 91

This is a digression from the main argument, but it throws light on different approaches to Tāntric exegesis.

Then he comes to the main theme contained in verses 5 to 9, i.e. the manifestation of the phonemes and of the corresponding *tattvas*.

The first word after *atha* in verse 5 is *ādya*. Instead of taking it in the usual sense "beginning with *a*" Abhinavagupta again avoids the temporal connotations of *ādya* and gives it a deeper meaning:

> The meaning again would be *a* which is the first of the vowels. In this context the word *ādya* has not been used merely in the sense of "foremost of an order," nor in the sense of "proximity," etc., but rather that whose existence continues in *a*, etc., i.e. in *a* and all other letters (*a ādau bhavaḥ iti ādyaḥ*). So it is being decisively propounded here that *a* is the stage of the highest sound (*parāvāgbhūmiḥ*) in which alone of these letters there is the non-conventional, eternal, natural form consisting only of consciousness.
> — p. 91

He has thus taken *ādi/ādya* in the sense of primordial, *a* being symbolic of *Anuttara* constitutes the ontological basis of all other letters and hence of all languages and

is identical with *parāvāk* and pure consciousness.[5] In the translation by A. Padoux:

> The plane of the supreme Word (*parāvāgbhūmiḥ*) of these phonemes is the one described [here], where these [phonemes] exist in the form of pure consciousness, uncreated, eternal. In such a condition of pure consciousness there are no separate forms of existence (*sarvasarvātmakatā*): all is perpetually and actually produced (*satatodita*). This Supreme Goddess, [the Word] supremely venerable, whilst remaining in this state of unequalled non-duality, takes into herself the [planes of] *paśyantī*, and so forth, which are the expansion of the venerable [goddesses] Parāparā and [Aparā], and is thus the womb of their infinite varieties. . . . Do consider this divine primordial consciousness (*saṁvid*), free from all traces of the impurity of contraction (*saṅkoca*), which is called illuminating intuition (*pratibhā*).
>
> — *Vāc*, p. 181[6]

This is again a crucial and condensed passage, taking the phonemes as represented by *a* at the Supreme level of the Word: *parāvāgbhūmi*. It is the stage where all other forms of language, in all their variety, are contained within that supreme level. The descent into *paśyantī*, etc. corresponds to the levels of *parāparā*, the intermediate stage of the "transcendent-cum-immanent" Energy, and *aparā*, the "lower, immanent" level on which speech assumes internal (*madhyamā*) and external (*vaikharī*) forms. Thus the infinite variety of both, speech and objective manifestation, is again "contained in her womb":

> . . . *parāparābhaṭṭārikā sphārarūpā antaḥkṛtya tattadananta-vaicitryagarbhamayī* — p. 35

The basic assumption is the doctrine that "everything is contained within everything," or "all is contained in a single part": *sarvaṁ sarvātmakam*.

This identity of the primal and supreme Word with Consciousness leads to the topic of *pratibhā*. This rich and complex concept needs to be looked into separately.

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5. Cf. *Bhagavad-Gītā* X.34: *akṣarāṇāmakāro 'smi*, "Of letters I am the letter A." Interestingly, in his commentary on this entire passage Abhinavagupta remains silent. One reason may be, as A. Sanderson considers his *Gītārthasaṁgraha* an early and immature work.

6. J.S. edn. p. 35, l. 21, p. 36, l. 1.

Pratibhā: Illuminating Insight

Pratibhā is a concept which connects and unites the areas of language and epistemology, poetic and aesthetic inspiration, mystical illumination, and the Ultimate Reality, the Goddess Parā. How all these areas of meaning are related is again a marvel of the genius of Abhinavagupta, having taken this term from such sources as Bhartṛhari's *Vākyapadīya* and Utpaladeva's *Īśvarapratyabhijñā Kārikā*. Various translations have been proposed, depending on the context: intuitive insight, illumination, creative consciousness, "intuition illuminatrice,"[7] poetic inspiration, "a flash of light, a revelation . . . characterised by immediacy and freshness."[8] What is important to note is the meaning of *pratibhā* on both sides: on the side of the Absolute (*Parā, Anuttarā*), and the side of the *yogī* or aesthete who intuits and shares a flash of understanding and enlightenment. This double meaning makes *pratibhā* a key concept to Abhinavagupta's approach to aesthetics and mystical experience.[9]

To present the background of the concept as known to Abhinavagupta, we may look at two definitions: one in the context of poetics, the other from the philosophy of Recognition.

(1) *rasānuguṇaśabdārthacintāstimitacetasaḥ* ।
kṣaṇaṁ svarūpasparśotthā prajñaiva pratibhā kaveḥ ॥ 117 ॥
sā hi cakṣurbhagavatastṛtīyamiti gīyate ।
yena sākṣātkarotyeṣa bhāvāṁstrailokyavarttinaḥ ॥ 118 ॥

> *Pratibhā* is that intellectual function of the poet whose mind is concentrated on thinking about words and meanings that are appropriate to *rasas*. It arises for a moment from the contact of the poet's mind with the essential nature (of Consciousness).[10]
>
> It is that which makes the things that exist in all the three worlds

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7. Cf. L. Silburn, Introduction to her French translation of the *Tantrāloka*, p. 54, note 87.
8. Gopinath Kaviraj, *The Doctrine of Pratibhā in Indian Philosophy*.
9. Cf. the 3rd *maṅgalaśloka*, identifying the Supreme Goddess with *pratibhā* and *camatkṛti*.
10. The expression *svarūpasparśa* is very close to the Trika philosophy. Cf. E. Fürlinger, *The Touch of Śakti*.

> seem as if they were right before our very eyes, and (hence) it is known as the third eye of Śiva.
>
> — Mahimabhaṭṭa, *Vyaktiviveka* II.117-18[11]

> (2) *yā caiṣā pratibhā tattatpadārtha-kramarūṣitā* |
> *akramānanta cidrūpaḥ pramātā sa maheśvaraḥ* ||
> — Utpaladeva, *Īśvarapratyabhijñā Kārikā* I.7.1

> And this intuitive light (*pratibhā*), influenced[12] by the succession of all the various objects is the knowing subject, which is consciousness devoid of succession and limit, Maheśvara. — tr. R. Torella, p. 136

First we have to see why Abhinavagupta almost gives an excursus on *pratibhā* at this juncture of his commentary, when he justifies the non-duality of the Absolute and its manifestation in language and in the universe, and before entering into the whole discourse on the phonematic emanation and its correspondence to the *tattvas*. He is eager not to get lost in the multiplicity and specificity of language and of objective reality. *Pratibhā* is the key which opens all the doors of the elements of language and of reality. And it is not just a conceptual key, for this the concept of *saṁvid*, Consciousness, or *parāvāk* would have sufficed. It is precisely *pratibhā* which has the implicit connotation of illuminating insight, and therefore, the element of spiritual practice and experience is essential for an understanding of the following text. Abhinavagupta seems to say, unless there is *pratibhā* (in the disciple/reader) the entire following discourse would be unintelligible.

Therefore, his injunction:

> *parāmṛśya ca prathamāṁ pratibhābhidhāṁ saṁkocakala-ṅkakāluṣyaleśaśūnyāṁ bhagavatīṁ saṁvidām,* — pp. 35-36

> Go on meditating/reflecting on the Divine Consciousness, called the initial illuminating insight, free from even a trace of the impurity of contraction.

The similes used for *pratibhā-jñāna* show that it is an instantaneous and encompassing vision: *śikharastha-jñāna* is compared to the view one has from the top of a mountain,

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11. Tr. Masson-Patwardhan, Śāntarasa . . . , pp. 19-20.

12. *rūṣitā* could also be translated as "covered."

where everything is seen in one glance and without succession. The other simile is to see the tail of a peacock and to perceive all the colours and forms of its feathers as in one glance (cf. p. 93 tr., Skt. p. 36).

Abhinavagupta establishes the viability of the concept of *pratibhā* both by argumentation and by reference to spiritual experience. The basic argument is that *pratibhā* is the same as *nirvikalpa saṁvid*, Consciousness free from thought-constructs,[13] which is the basis of all perception, thought, and hence language.[14] This pure Consciousness is experienced at and in the intervals between particular perceptions or thoughts.

> This consciousness which the Āgamas celebrate under the name of insight (*pratibhā*), unfolding (*unmeṣa*), and so forth, abides in the interval between two dualistic cognitions, when one ceases and the other appears. It is undifferentiated [or devoid of thought-construct: *avikalpakam*]. It precedes as such all differentiated thought-constructs such as the notion of blue, and so forth, which are mutually exclusive [since linked to duality]. As such, it is inseparable from the infinite diversity of appearances [constituting the world]. That there is such an interval between two cognitions cannot be denied, because [cognitions] cannot but be different; and this interval is made of pure consciousness. . . .
>
> — PTV, p. 36 Skt., tr. A. Padoux, *Vāc*, pp. 181-82

This interstitial void and *nirvikalpa* state is an essential approach to pure Consciousness both in theory and in practice. The *Vijñāna Bhairava* offers concrete examples of *dhāraṇā*s which permit entry in such a state.

In a context which is closely related to the *Parātriśikā Vivaraṇa*, namely the phonematic consciousness (*varṇasaṁvid*) Abhinavagupta develops the theme of *pratibhā* in its various aspects in his *Tantrāloka*, also, as in our *maṅgalaśloka* 2, in relation to *camatkāra*: wonder, blissful surprise. It is apposite to quote the definition of *pratibhā* in context:

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13. R. Torella translates *nirvikalpaka* as "exempt from mental elaborations," in: *The Īśvarapratyabhijñā-kārikā*, p. 90 (Kārikā I.2.1-2 with Vṛtti). It could also be translated as "non-discursive."

14. Cf. p. 36, Skt., p. 92 tr.

> The subject whose own understanding is awakened (*svapramābodho*), thanks to the elimination of obstacles, becomes capable to produce phonemes, sentences, etc. out of himself.
>
> To the degree that the uncreated reality excels, to the same degree the wonder of delight increases.
>
> The different degrees of intuitive insight are in relation to the gradual merging of the conventional (linguistic) signs in the fullness of the original phonemes free from *māyā* (*amāyīya*).
>
> Those who are established in the intuitive insight (*pratibhā*) characterised by the power of these first letters, they certainly attain poetic and rhetoric gifts.
>
> But he who rests in pure Consciousness in its highest form, devoid of any conventional limitations [of language], what is it that he does not know? What is it that he is not able to do? — *TĀ*, XI, 75-80[15]

We will consider later the important distinction Abhinavagupta makes between the original phonemes (*ādyavarṇa*) which are not subject to *māyā*, and conventional language (*saṅketa*) belonging to the realm of *māyā*.

To round off the excursus on *pratibhā*, Abhinavagupta gives a summary in verse form:

> That which moves in the prior, intervening, and posterior state of the apprehension of all the objects of sense, which is universal, which is endowed with the splendour of the highest Śakti, that indeed is the divine creative consciousness (*prātibhaṁ*). To one who is absorbed in that consciousness, how can depression brought about by the lack of this divine consciousness ever occur? — p. 95

Pratibhā, Grace, and Spiritual Practice

Pratibhā, being of the nature of sudden insight, flashing intuition and unconditioned consciousness naturally comes close to grace (*śaktipāta*), which is also sudden, unconditional and bestowing illumination. Therefore the question arises whether any spiritual practice is necessary or meaningful to attain such a state. Abhinavagupta responds in a very balanced manner, safeguarding on the one side

15. Cf. Jayaratha's Commentary on XI.77b-78a.

the total freedom of Absolute Consciousness to manifest itself/Herself, and on the other avoiding a simple quietistic passivity. In the present context he states:

> *tathāvadhānātiśayarūḍhaiḥ sahasaiva sarvajñatābhūmira-saṅkucitaparamārthā akṛtrimatadrūpā adhiśayyate eva, parānugrahapavitritairabhyāsakramaśāṇanigharṣaniṣpoṣita. . . .*

> Parābhaṭṭārikā (the goddess *parā*) who is none other than the stage of omniscience, the highest truth without any limitation and natural is suddenly resorted to by those who are established in intensive awareness of that state and those whose impurities in the form of uncertainty, doubt or other synonymous terms owing to non-belief in that have been completely ground down by grinding on the grindstone of continuous spiritual discipline. Even in the case of those who are assailed by doubt, the omniscient stage of consciousness appears, on certain occasions when they are able to view Reality, in a slightly limited form, though not in its full, natural form. — p. 92

The image he uses of the grinding stone of spiritual practice shows that effort is not excluded for attaining insight and even omniscience (the final result of the practice of the Tantra, verses 36-37). Intensity of awareness is a necessary condition in the school of sudden enlightenment to which our text belongs. Another condition is freedom from contraction of consciousness (*asaṅkucita*). But even for those who are not purified and established in intensive awareness, there are occasions to experience *pratibhā* at certain moments. The *Vijñāna Bhairava* gives examples of such situations, which may be temporary, but which nevertheless share in the state of *nirvikalpa*.[16]

In another context, that of the analysis of language, and of the correspondence with the *tattva*s, Abhinavagupta responds in an ironical way to the idea that grace or the Divine will is sufficient, and no effort is required in order to achieve understanding or insight:

> If it is said that God's will is perfect, it is not open to discussion, then enough of useless efforts like reading and concentrating on

16. Cf. *VBh* 71 (joy of meeting), 75 (waking and sleep), 89 (pain), 111 (exhaustion), 115 (deep well), 118 (several examples), etc.

> books, exposition, discussion, etc. This heavy burden should certainly be abandoned. One should then sit quietly. God's will alone would save one who is to be saved. It is His merciful will that makes one depend on such thought.
>
> By no means should people remain stretching their legs and lying with ease, indulging in enjoyment, without deliberating for themselves, nor should people sit idle, averse to the constant application of the competent intellect for the subtlest deliberation, brought about by the intenser and intenser grace of the Lord which appears in accordance with one's *sādhanā* (spiritual praxis). Therefore the question raised by me has to be examined in all respects. I am not going to give it up in this way. — pp. 105-08

This clarification is all the more important, since the purpose of the entire revelation, as stated in the beginning, is bestowing grace, and the tradition belongs to what Sanderson calls, a "subitist" approach to Divine Consciousness.[17]

We find a similar argument in the *Īśvarapratyabhijñā Vivṛti Vimarśinī* (vol. III, p. 94). There Abhinavagupta defends the importance of logical reasoning (*pramāṇa*, the subject of *IPK* II.3) against the quietistic attitude:

> (If somebody says) that the Āgama (authority of revelation) is a verbalisation (*śabdanam*) accepted by him by the will of God alone, what then is the use of logicians? (He replies, O) What bad logicians you are! God alone manifests himself, reflects and makes reflect.[18] In that case, why not remain silent? What is then the use of writing books, teachings and learning? Surely, in that case one should remain as one is, as *Parameśvara* himself would remain inactive. . . .[19] (He replies:) But it is he himself who, by his own will, is known as the author, as the disciple to be enlightened as well as the one enlightened. (*Śivadṛṣṭi* III. 74-75)

Nirvikalpa Saṁvid — The Basis of Thought and Language

Abhinavagupta employs different forms of reasoning to establish that all

17. Cf. *PTV*, p. 8.

18. Relating to *prakāśa* and *vimarśa*.

19. The argument continues by quoting *Śivadṛṣṭi*, III.72-76.

differentiated perceptions, thoughts, and hence language are based on the undifferentiated pure Consciousness: *nirvikalpa saṁvid*. The appearance of differentiation is not possible without an underlying undifferentiated state, because the *vikalpa*s have no independence to manifest (*vikalpānāṁ ca avikalpaṁ vinā nodayaḥ, asvātantryāt*, pp. 36-37).

It is only *nirvikalpa saṁvid* which makes the use of language possible, which depends on the recollection of conventions, and: "How can the recollection of conventional (linguistic) signs be possible without the experience of indeterminate consciousness?" (p. 94, Skt.). We need not go further into these arguments which surface again in different contexts, because this is a fundamental position of the *saṁvidadvayavāda*, the doctrine of the non-dualism of Consciousness. What is interesting is the homology, if not identity, that Abhinavagupta discovers with the Buddhist concept of *ālayavijñāna*, the substratum-consciousness: *tathā ca vivekakuśalair-ālayavijñānam-evamevaupagatam*, p. 37). The Buddhists are here described as *vivekakuśala*, "those who are adept in discrimination."

At the end of the entire introductory part of the second section the author contrasts the joyful state of insight (*prātibhām*) with its opposite, the state of depression,[20] caused by lack of divine consciousness, and ignorance of one's true nature. This is necessary for completing the argument.

Abhinavagupta refers to the "impurities" (*mala*) which obstruct the recognition of the divine Consciousness, and he quotes the well-known phrase of the *Mālinīvijayottara Tantra*:

malamajñānamichhanti saṁsārāṅkura-kāraṇam | — I.23

By identifying *mala* with ignorance he underlines the importance of liberating knowledge over and above ritual, as expressed in the very first question of the Devī: *yena vijñātamātreṇa* . . . (v. 1).[21]

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20. *Glāni*: Gnoli translates it by *malattia* (sickness), but it is definitely a mental or psychosomatic deficiency.

21. Cf. S. Vasudeva, *The Yoga of the Mālinīvijayottaratantra*, p. 165: "The three impurities (*mala*), which in the dualist Siddhānta are conceived of subtle yet tangible substances which can only be physically removed by Śaiva initiation and the subsequent obligatory →

In this long introductory part to the interpretation of verses 5-9 Abhinavagupta has clarified the background for what is going to follow, by establishing the almost identity of the concepts of *nirvikalpa saṁvid* (thought-free consciousness), *pratibhā* (intuitive illumination) and *parāvāc* (the Supreme level of the Word), as well as *unmeṣa* ("awakening," opening, unfolding of consciousness).[22] The origin of these concepts is different, but he shows that they belong to the same level of consciousness, which forms the underlying background of the following development of manifestation.

→ observances, are in the *Mālinīvijayottara* boldly equated with ignorance (*ajñāna*). This important passage is frequently cited as scriptural proof for the liberating power of knowledge."

22. Cf. *Spanda Kārikā* III.8-9, quoted in this context, along with Kṣemarāja's comm.

8

Levels of Manifestation
Emanation of Phonemes and Tattvas

HAVING stated his premises, Abhinavagupta proceeds then to the hermeneutics proper of the verses 5-9. But this requires another clarification of the underlying concepts. The Tantra gives in short the emanation of the universe in the twofold form of language, or the phonemes of the Sanskrit alphabet, and in the levels of the cosmotheandric realities or *tattvas*.[1] If the first part is centred on *Anuttara* and *aham*, the universal I-consciousness, the second part expands to the *idam*, the "this-ness" or objective reality. Again, there is no such duality as *aham-idam*, or the dichotomy of subjectivity and objectivity, because:

> The Lord assumes these states (or: phenomena) which are held in His shining Self by His own light by veiling Himself, that is to say, He manifests by adopting the state of this-ness (i.e. objectivity) whose nature is insentience. Then again He encompasses all this objectivity with I-feeling.[2] — p. 99

According to the Śaivāgamas, the universe and language are co-extensive,[3] and

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1. I prefer the term *cosmotheandric* to cosmology, because it encompasses the cosmic, human and divine dimensions, which are contained in the scheme of the *tattvas*. The term is not new, but it has been revived especially by R. Panikkar, cf. *The Cosmotheandric Experience*, Indian edn., Delhi, MLBD, 1998.

2. *evaṁ svātmanyeva prabhāsvare prakāśanena dhriyamāṇān bhāvān dhārayati svayam-aprakāśībhāvena-jaḍatāsvabhāvedaṁbhāvāspadatā-prāpaṇena prakāśayati parameśvara eva* | *punarapi ahaṁbhāvenaiva ācchādayati* | p. 39, ll. 11-13.

3. In the Siddhānta Āgamas we find almost the same theories, but interpreted in a dualistic way. Cf. Francesco Sferra, "Materials for the Study of the Levels of Sound in the Sanskrit Sources of the Śaivasiddhānta", in: *Mélanges tantriques à la mémoire d'Hélène Brunner*, pp. 443-74.

hence the creation of the elements of the cosmotheandric reality corresponds to the emanation of the phonemes:

> Each of these (phonemes, *varṇa*) will then stand for a different moment in the gradual condensation and solidification of the energy of the Word, and will bring successively into existence each of the thirty-six ontic levels, the *tattvas*, of which the entire manifestation consists.[4]

Before going into these correspondences, we will have to define what is a *tattva* in the context of the Āgamas. The definition, always based on a *nirvacana* or semantic interpretation, differs from the meaning it has in Nyāya,[5] which is derived from *tat+tva*, "real-ity." The Śaiva "etymology" derives it from the verbal root *tan*, to stretch, to expand, to weave, and hence the implication is that of a reality/principle that is pervasive, that expands. The *tattvas* are therefore generic principles (*jāti*), "similar to the common property (*sāmānya*)."[6] Abhinavagupta defines *tattva* in the relevant chapter of the *Tantrāloka* as follows:

> *svasminkārye 'tha dharmaughe* ।
> *yadvāpi svasadṛgguṇe* ॥
>
> *āste sāmānyakalpena* ।
> *tananādvyāptṛ bhāvataḥ* ॥
>
> *tat tattvaṁ kramaśaḥ pṛthvī* ।
> *pradhānaṁ puṁśivādayaḥ* ॥
>
> *dehānāṁ bhuvanānām ca* ।
> *na prasaṅgastato bhavet* । -- IX.4b-6a

> That, which, resembling a universal, resides in [1.] its own effect, in [2.] a collection of properties or in [3.] a group of experients etc. similar to itself, is a Tattva, because it is extensive (*tananād*), i.e. because of its pervasion. In order, [Tattvas are such as] earth and matter, soul and Śiva, etc. Thus it does not follow that [this definition applies to] bodies and worlds. — tr. S. Vasudeva, p. 191

4. A. Padoux, *Vāc*, p. 223.

5. Cf. *Nyāyabhāṣya* introduction, quoted in S. Vasudeva, p. 189, note 6.

6. S. Vasudeva, The Yoga . . . , p. 197.

Thus the *tattva*s, comprising the twenty-five of Sāṁkhya and additional eleven are not the realities *per se*, but the pervasive general principles underlying all existent entities. According to the *Sarvajñānottara*, "the *tattva*s are imperceptible and pervasive in the whole world."[7] Abhinavagupta makes it even more clear when he defines[8] *tattva* as "that which is the cause for the [conscious subject's] collectivisation of distinct groups, [which] appears as one, undivided. As for example, Earth and Water [respectively in the case] of mountains, trees, cities, etc., and rivers, ponds and ocean."[9] This elucidation may suffice to avoid any misunderstanding of the term. The grouping of the *tattva*s into units of five corresponds to the *varga*s or classes of consonants of the Sanskrit alphabet.

Phonemes and Tattvas

1.	Phonemes	*ka*	*kha*	*ga*	*gha*	*ṅa*
	Tattvas or the gross elements	*pṛthivī*	*jala*	*agni*	*vāyu*	*ākāśa*
2.	Phonemes	*ca*	*cha*	*ja*	*jha*	*ña*
	Tanmātras	*gandha*	*rasa*	*rūpa*	*sparśa*	*śabda*
3.	Phonemes	*ṭa*	*ṭha*	*ḍa*	*ḍha*	*ṇa*
	Organs of action	*upastha*	*pāyu*	*pāda*	*pāṇi*	*vāk*
4.	Phonemes	*ta*	*tha*	*da*	*dha*	*na*
	Organs of sense	*prāṇa*	*rasanā*	*cakṣus*	*tvak*	*śrotra*
5.	Phonemes	*pa*	*pha*	*ba*	*bha*	*ma*
	The psychic apparatus, the primal matter (*prakṛti*) and finite experient (*puruṣa*)	*manas*	*buddhi*	*ahaṁkāra*	*prakṛti*	*puruṣa*

7. Quoted from S. Vasudeva, The Yoga . . . , note 12: *tatam etairjagat kṛtsnaṁ . . . | sūkṣmagāḥ sarvagāḥ nityāḥ sahajāḥ sarvajantuṣu* || — *Sarvajñānottara* v. 34, p. 197.

8. *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvimarśinī* III.1.2: *iha tasya bhāvastattvam — iti bhinnānāṁ vargāṇāṁ vargī karaṇanimittaṁ yadekamavibhaktaṁ bhāti tattattvam, yathā girivṛkṣapura prabhṛtīnāṁ nadīsaraṁ sāgarādīnāṁ ca pṛthivīrūpatvam abrūpatvaṁ ceti* | — vol. II, p. 192. Cf. S. Vasudeva, p. 191, note 18.

9. Tr. S. Vasudeva, p. 192.

Emanation of Phonemes and Tattvas in verses 5-9

Before going into the extensive interpretation of the *Vivaraṇa*, let us consider the condensed version of the Tantra:

> *athādyāstithayaḥ sarve svarā vindvavasānagāḥ* |
> *tadantaḥ kālayogena somasūryau prakīrtitau* || 5 ||
>
> *pṛthivyādīni tattvāni puruṣāntāni pañcasu* |
> *kramātkādiṣu vargeṣu makārānteṣu suvrate* || 6 ||
>
> *vāyvagni-salilendrāṇām dhāraṇānāṁ catuṣṭayam* |
> *tadūrdhvaṁ śādi-vikhyātaṁ purastāt brahmapañcakam* || 7 ||
>
> *amūla tatkramāj jñeyā kṣāntā sṛṣṭirudāhṛtā* |
> *sarveṣām eva mantrāṇāṁ vidyānāṁ ca yaśasvinī* || 8 ||
>
> *iyaṁ yoniḥ samākhyātā sarvatantreṣu sarvadā* |
>
> — *Parātrīśikā* 5-9ab

The end of this group of verses (8-9ab) states the reason for the unfolding of the alphabet and the corresponding *tattvas*: The *kaulikavidhi* or the process of achieving the *kaulikasiddhi* leads to *mantra*, and *mantra* consists of, or is, the essence or condensation of the phonemes of language. Therefore,

> Starting from *a* to *kṣa*,[10] the order is known as that of emission; it is the source of all *mantras* and *vidyās*, as is always proclaimed in all the Tantras. — *PT* 8-9ab

Thus the elements of language are homologised with creation or emanation. The element of Time comes in the very first verse (5), where the vowels (*svara*) are identified with *tithis*, lunar days or phases. *Tithi* does not only connote the number 15, it is a station or phase, as will be seen later with the symbolism of the individual vowels. From *a* to *anusvāra* (*bindu*) fifteen vowels are corresponding to 15 *tithis*, with the symbolic implication that in their totality they are moving to a state of fullness (the full moon of knowledge or *bodhacandra*[11]). In relation to time they are

10. Last letter in the Āgamic alphabet.

11. Cf. *Tantrasāra* summary verse of introduction. *TS*, p. 5 : *ajñānaṁ kila bandhaheturuditaḥ śāstre malaṁ tatsmṛtam* | *pūrṇajñānakalodaya tadakhilaṁ nirmalatāṁ gacchati* | "Ignorance is said to be the cause of bondage, it is called impurity in the Śāstras. But when the full →

connected with the sun and moon (v. 5cd). The entire symbolism of sun, moon and fire will be unfolded later, one meaning being that of the knowable (*soma*), the means of knowledge (*sūrya*) and the knower (*agni*).

Then follow the consonants corresponding to the *tattva*s, in groups of five (v. 6), from which the entire diversity of manifestation arises. Two groups of phonemes are marked out: the four called *dhāraṇā*s, i.e. the semi-vowels, *ya, ra, la, va*, the seed-syllables corresponding to wind (*ya*), fire (*ra*), water (*la*) earth (*va*), and Indra, respectively and the five called *pañcabrahma*, namely *śa, ṣa, sa, ha, kṣa*.[12] We shall return to this symbolisation in the context of the *Vivaraṇa*.

The symbolism of the *tithi*s in relation to the vowels does not end here. There is a complex symbolical interrelation between the elements of time as phases of the moon (also called *kalā*), the movement of breath (*prāṇa-apāna*) and the vowels (*svara*). *Prāṇa* is the source of time[13] and it is measured by *tuṭi*s (the space covered by breath measuring two-and-a-half fingers). Since 16 *tuṭi*s cover one unit of exhalation and inhalation, these are also homologised with the 16 vowels, from *a* to *visargaḥ*.

> When the sixteenth digit, which has the power to expand (*visargakalā*) remains apart, i.e. does not expand, it is designated the seventeenth digit.
> — p. 187

According to the *Śrī Vādya Śāstra* and other sources the *visarga*, consisting of two points, is divided into two and becomes *bindu*, which is then identified with the 17th, unchangeable *kalā* (*amākalā*).

The entire interconnection between time, breath, and the vowels, far from being a mere speculation on the numbers (15, 16, 17), based on *tithi* at the beginning of verse 5, throws light on the utterance of the phonemes (vowels) which is dependent on breath and on time.

→ moon of knowledge rises, it attains perfect purity." The implication is also that the *kalā*s or *tithi*s, the phases of the moon, represent partial or fragmentary knowledge, until full enlightenment occurs, compared to the full moon.

12. Cf. A. Sanderson, *History through Textual Criticism*, p. 37, note 47: "This terminology is peculiar to *Parātriṁśikā* 7." It has been taken over by the *Ahirbudhuya Saṁhitā*, 16, 84.

13. Cf. the chapter on *kālādhvan* in *Tantrāloka*, *āhnika* 6.

Abhinavagupta replies to an objection:

> If it is objected, "How can there be division of one phoneme *'a'* (into 16th and 17th *kalās*), for *'a'* which is *anuttara* is partless?" We reply, "In our system, everything is partless, being non-different from the light of consciousness." Just as, through the unimpeded autonomy of Śiva, even when parts appear, partlessness of Reality is invariable, even so is the case with *'a'*. Where is the inconsistency? Thus the propriety of the development of phonemes is maintained, because of the appearance of partlessness in parts. Otherwise (on the occasion of utterance), how can the air whose nature it is to produce impact successively through the dental, labial, guttural, palatal phonemes strike the palate after having struck the throat? If it were to spread simultaneously in all the organs of articulation, then there would ensue simultaneity in the utterance of all the sounds.
>
> — pp. 187-88

A Commentary on 'a'

Abhinavagupta then opens the commentary on verses 5-9 by focusing on the phoneme *a* (expressed in verse 5 as: *atha a-ādya . . .*)

> That *anuttara* itself, which is *akula* whose nature is *a*, is all this universal manifestation (*kaulikasr̥ṣṭi*). — p. 89

The phoneme *a* represents *anuttara* and *akula*,[14] the Unsurpassable, beyond manifestation (*kula* being Śakti, and *akula* Bhairava). A brief definition by Somānanda[15] says:

> *a-bījaṁ śuddhaśivarūpam* — p. 20
>
> The seed syllable *a* is of the pure nature of Śiva.

One could also translate: "is the pure form/symbol of Śiva." *A* is the original sound (*ādyavarṇa*) and the origin of all sounds, and hence of all manifestation.

> *A* is the stage of the Supreme Word (*parāvāgbhūmi*) in which alone of

14. The first phoneme not only of the Sanskrit alphabet but of most languages, *a*, is here actually an *a privativum*, cf. J. Gonda, Why are *ahiṁsā* and similar concepts often expressed in a negative form? Cf. *Tantrāloka* 3.67.

15. In his own *Vivr̥ti*.

> these phonemes there is the non-conventional, eternal, natural form consisting of nothing but Consciousness. In the "body" (*vapus*) made of Consciousness the interconnectedness of everything is ever present (*sarvasarvātmakatā satatoditaiva*). — p. 91 modified

Here we find the essential difference which Abhinavagupta makes throughout the text between language as conventional (*sāṅketika*, consisting of signs, or *sāmayika* based on convention or agreement), and as immediate, uncontrived, spontaneous (*akṛtrima*), because belonging to the supreme level of sound. As we shall see, *mantras* belong to this non-conventional aspect of the Word.

A is thus called "the matrix of the Supreme Sound" (*paranādagarbha*).[16] After having elucidated all the phonemes and *tattvas*, Abhinavagupta summarises the point thus: "These 34 categories having been settled according to the procedure of the Śāstra resort to *a* only, as that is the initial and primal letter." (p. 102, *evametāni caturtriṁśattattvāni prakriyātmanā sthitāni akārameva ādirūpatayā bhajante*, p. 41, l. 15).

In the context of the analysis of *Anuttara*, Abhinavagupta had already stated:

> *A* is the (totality of the) limitating power (*kalā*) not submitted to *māyā*, beyond hearing, uncreated, wondering at its own (essence: that of the) waveless sea of consciousness resting in the great light (of the Absolute). It spreads from the first to the last stage (of emanation), being the condition of the fullness of the supreme "I" in its total awareness of the universe (as produced by) the effulgent spreading out of the Energy. — tr. A. Padoux, *Vāc*, p. 236[17]

When he comes back to commenting on the unfolding of the vowels, Abhinavagupta identifies *a* with the power of absolute freedom of the Lord:

> The power of absolute freedom or autonomy (*svātantrya-śakti*) of the Lord, is called *a*. In it the objectivity has not yet begun to develop and it is therefore essentially a reflective awareness whose inner nature is that of a pure interiorised mass of consciousness (*antarghanasaṁvid*). — Padoux, *Vāc*, p. 238[18]

16. *Tantrasāra* 3, p. 12.

17. Skt. p. 9, tr. p. 24.

18. Skt. p. 58: *evaṁ parameśvarasya icchātmikā svātantryaśaktir-anunmīlitabhāva vibhāsā antarghana-saṁvit svabhāva-vimarśasārā 'a' ityucyate* ।

Abhinavagupta's effort is ever directed to proving the foundation of language in *nirvikalpa saṁvid*, consciousness free from mental constructs, and descending from the highest level (*Parā-vāk*), without excluding the manifoldness of both language and reality.

> In the nature of consciousness, the omnifariousness of everything (*sarvasarvātmakatā*) is always present. That highest Divinity, viz. *parā* (who is only the dynamic form of *anuttara*), though consisting of the highest stage of non-differentiation is teeming with endless variety, containing within Herself as she does the *parāparā* expansion of *paśyantī*, etc. — p. 91

He not only states a metaphysical truth but no less, as a spiritual master, leads the disciples/readers to its realisation:

> Parābhaṭṭārikā who is the stage of omniscience (*sarvjñatābhūmiḥ*), the highest truth without any limitation (*asaṅkucitaparamārthā*) and natural is suddenly resorted to by those who are established in intensive awareness of that state (*tathāvadhānātiśaya rūḍhaiḥ*), who are purified by utmost grace (*parānugraha-pavitritaiḥ*) and those whose impurities in the form of uncertainty, doubt or other synonymous terms owing to non-belief in that have been completely ground down by grinding on the grindstone of continuous spiritual discipline. — p. 92

Here again, the complementarity of one's effort and Divine grace is perspicacious. The intuitive insight (*pratibhā*) or awakening of consciousness (*unmeṣa*) is identical with the unconditioned consciousness.

> Therefore it (the *nirvikalpa saṁvid* or indeterminate consciousness) abides undivided among the endless determinate percepts. The interval between the two determinate ideas can by no means be denied because of the difference between the two ideas. That interval consists of consciousness only, otherwise (i.e. if consciousness is not present in the interval), on account of the extirpation of the residual traces of consciousness caused by that interval or gap (devoid of consciousness), memory, congruous link, etc. between the consciousness preceding the gap and the consciousness succeeding it would become impossible. — p. 93

The pure awareness of this interstitial gap is precisely the basis for the methods of attaining pure consciousness taught in the *Vijñāna Bhairava*.[19]

That pure state of consciousness pervades also the manifold perceptions, including language at its conventional level:

> Determinate perceptions do not arise without the indeterminate consciousness [*nirvikalpa saṁvid*] because they lack the freedom for emerging by themselves. This freedom belongs only to indeterminate consciousness, for it is only indeterminate consciousness that serves as means for the recollection of the conventional signs, etc. How can the recollection of conventional signs, etc. be possible without the experience of indeterminate consciousness? In such consciousness, according to the previous principle, there is the absence of the limitation of time, etc. Thus the one divine indeterminate consciousness (*pratibhā*) defined by my weighty statement is of this kind, i.e. of unlimited nature, the very Self of all. Not only in the beginning and the end but in the intervening state also, she is the origin of the emergence of the other present, past and future determinate apprehensions. — p. 94

Interestingly enough, Abhinavagupta equates this indeterminate consciousness with the Buddhist Yogācāra notion of *ālayavijñāna* or "substratum consciousness" (p. 93 tr., p. 37 Skt.).[20] After arguing in various ways to establish this point, Abhinavagupta sums up the still introductory section of his commentary on *atha ādya* . . . (v. 5ff.).[21]

There he establishes *parāvāgbhūmi*, also identical with the original phoneme *a*, as the basis for the following "speculation" (in the etymological sense of *speculum*, mirror) on language.

A Note on Method

Abhinavagupta uses any occasion to declare his method and approach. While

19. Quotations from which are not infrequent in the *Vivaraṇa*, cf. pp. 46 (*VBh* 60), 17 (verse 69 and 70), 79 (verse 68).

20. Abhinavagupta uses this concept also in *IPVV* I.5.5 (vol. II, p. 99, l. 7).

21. See ch. 7, p. 130.

criticising Somānanda[22] — with due reverence of course — he states the principle of universality of comprehension.[23]

Further he relates experience and reasoning, having clarified the spiritual conditions (p. 92 quoted above). Although intuition, omniscience, access to the pure, uncontrived state of consciousness is a necessary condition for understanding Reality, he admits that even people with a limited mode of perception can have access to the true understanding in momentary insights (cf. p. 36 ll. 7-8, p. 92). The same intuitive knowledge can be established by reasoning (*yukti*). Abhinavagupta clearly follows these three steps: Āgama, spiritual experience — depending also on grace — and reasoning (*tarka*).[24] The basis of his hermeneutics is also the acceptance of the *Tantra* as *Sūtra*, with the implication of the manifold layers of meanings (*śatasahiṣṇutā sūtragranthasya*, p. 35).

The stage is now set for the interpretation of the verses 5-9 and the presentation of the manifestation of phonemes and *tattvas*.[25] This section starts with *tadevaṁ sthite granthārtho nirṇīyate* ("it being so, the meaning of the text is being explained," p. 38, ll. 4-3 from below), basing the following development on the presuppositions stated.

Descent from "I" to "This" — *aham* — *idam*

All vowels, from *a* to *visarga*, are at the level of *Śiva-tattva*, and the groups of five consonants (*varga*) correspond to the respective unit of five *tattvas* (p. 98) (see *Table*, p. 143). Since the descent from Śiva to Earth is a movement from (Divine) subjectivity to objectivity, from *aham* to *idam*, it not only passes through different stages of predominance of the one over the other, but Abhinavagupta makes it clear that at every stage, even the most externalised and removed from consciousness, it is only

> the Lord [who] assumes these states (of *rāga, vidyā, kalā, māyā*) which are held in His shining Self by His own light by veiling Himself,

22. This difference of opinion with Somānanda is relevant in the context of Mālinī, cf. S. Vasudeva, "Synaesthetic Iconography: I. The Nādiphāntakrama", in: *Mélanges tantriques . . .*, p. 531. See later section on Mālinī.

23. Cf. p. 91, quoted on p. 130.

24. *anubhava-yuktyanupraviṣṭānām . . .*, p. 35.

25. Silburn and Padoux call it "phonematic cosmogony" (cosmogonie phonématique), *Tantrāloka* 3.67, p. 151, note 12, and elsewhere.

> that is to say, He manifests by adopting the state of thisness (i.e. objectivity) whose nature is insentiency. Then again He encompasses all this objectivity with I-feeling. — p. 99

Abhinavagupta hastens to emphasise the reality of the *idam*. Strangely, following the order of the Tantra, the *tattvas* following after Śiva start from below: *pṛthivī*, earth, corresponding to the phoneme *ka*. The *tattvas*, instead of being presented in descent or *sṛṣṭikrama*, are described in ascending order or *saṁhārakrama*. Abhinavagupta raises this question further on. But, considering the metaphysical and cosmogonic order from *aham* to *idam*, we now follow the descending order. Now in the dynamic movement from the Divine (Śiva, Śakti, Sadāśiva, Īśvara), through the Human (the *kañcukas*, *antaḥkaraṇas* and *indriyas*) to the cosmic (from the *tanmātras* to the *mahābhūtas*), there is a bridge to be crossed, from *Māyā* to *Śuddha-vidyā* or pure knowledge. In the *Vivaraṇa* Abhinavagupta defends an intermediary *tattva* between the *kañcukas* and *Śuddha-vidyā*, that is, *Mahāmāyā* (p. 101), also in correspondence to the levels of the *pramātās* or perceivers.

The Kañcukas or Limiting Powers and their Seed-syllables[26]

A very special place is assigned to the *kañcukas*, the so-called covering powers,[27] which are here only four in number, namely *māyā*, *kalā*, *rāga* and *vidyā*, corresponding to the four semi-vowels *ya ra la va* (also called the *bījas* or seed-*mantras* of wind, *vāyu*, fire, *agni*, water, *jala*, and Indra for earth) and they are called *dhāraṇās* (v. 7). In the order of descent these *kañcukas* derive directly from *māyā* and they perform a dual function: they "cover" or "veil" the soul, each one representing one form of limitation as compared to the same power in its unlimited or divine form; on the other hand, they also "provide the indispensable conditions for (the soul's) sojourn in the world of *māyā*."[28] In that sense they are capacities which can move in both directions: towards limitation and bondage if they are united with the three *malas* or impurities of the soul, or towards ascent to the *tattvas* above *māyā*, belonging to the "pure path" (*śuddhādhvan*).

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26. Cf. R. Torella, *The Kañcukas in the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava Tantric Tradition: A Few Considerations between Theology and Grammar*, p. 55.

27. R. Torella, in his excellent study, has used the unusual translation "cuirass".

28. Art. *Kañcuka* in: *Tāntrikābhidhānakośa*, vol. II, p. 41 (tr. from French).

> The *kañcuka*s are, in this case [i.e. in the *PTV*], described, along with the semi-vowels, as being at the same time the means by which the Divinity manifests the objectivity, and that through which it is transformed into the subject perceiving this objectivity. He (Abhinavagupta), also calls them "supports" (*dhāraṇā*) because they support [as well] the impure manifestation[29] as well as the consciousness which the (limited) subject has of it.[30]

It is because of this ambiguous function of the *kañcuka*s that, among all the *tattvas*, Abhinavagupta gives them a special place in this discussion of the emanation. They, so to say, stand on the borderline between subjectivity and objectivity. In the words of R. Torella:[31]

> The cuirasses constitute the most internal and concealed structure of individual personality. In establishing their existence, Tāntric tradition — in general, even those grounded on dualistic presuppositions — seems to have been driven by a twofold need: to overcome the dualism and the basic incommunicability of the purely spiritual and the purely material components — *puruṣa-prakṛti* or *puruṣa-buddhi* — and to single out a boundary land within the human being where the *jaḍa-ajaḍa* components almost touch one another, as it were. What Tāntrikas' thought and action seem most interested in are precisely borderlines, rather than the definite states of being. In particular, the monistic schools of Kashmir will end up by seeing borderlines everywhere or, in other words, infinite potential openings, which make the *jaḍa-ajaḍa* dichotomy more and more problematic and finally overthrow it altogether. — art. cit., pp. 66-67

An entire spectrum of spiritual psychology is contained in the Śaiva understanding of the *kañcuka*s.[32] The fact that the four semi-vowels are called *antaḥstha* in grammar, "those established within" or between, is also interpreted in relation to the *kañcuka*s

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29. I.e. the *tattva*s from *māyā* down to Earth.

30. Art. *Kañcuka*, ibid., pp. 42-43 (tr. from French).

31. R. Torella in his article, The *Kañcuka*s . . . goes into great detail and brings out precisely this feature of their being at the "borderline."

32. Cf. the positive functions of the *kañcuka*s in Kṣemarāja's commentary on *Svacchanda Tantra* II.42-43.

that they are "interior" to the individual soul, and even imperceptible to itself.[33] Since these powers characterise the *puruṣa* or limited soul, and they are "in between," the *Laghuvṛtti* uses the telling image, comparing *puruṣa* to Triśaṅku,[34] hanging between heaven and earth:

> These are the four powers that maintain the individual soul resting in the middle like Triśaṅku, which otherwise would fall into the condition of complete inertia like a rock, or would ascend to the sky of consciousness like the supreme Lord.[35]

What a powerful image of the human condition!

Coming back to our text, Abhinavagupta gives importance to the designation, *dhāraṇā*, and to the verb constituting it: *dhārayanti*, which implies two causatives. "*Dhāraṇā*s are so-called, because they make the individual (*aṇu*) think of the universal powers of Bhairava separately" (p. 39 Skt.). The two causatives refer to the causing agent and the caused (*prayojya-prayojaka bhāvadvairūpyāt* . . . , p. 39). "All these states (i.e. of the *kañcuka*s) are held in one's own self which is of the nature of light, in the highest state of fullness which is identical with Bhairava and universal."[36] Therefore, "In one's consciousness also, one can bear witness to the fact that it is the (divine) consciousness that appears in all forms."[37]

The entire argument leads to the second causative of *dhārayati* with the meaning that it is Śiva himself who is reduced to the status of *paśu* or individual soul, through the *kañcukas: rāga, vidyā, kalā, māyā*, which become the inciting or causing agents (p. 100).[38]

In the consideration of the progressive emanation of the *tattva*s and its phonematic correspondence another doctrine of non-dualist Śaivism has to be taken into account, i.e. the seven subjects or perceivers (*pramātā*), related to levels of

33. R. Torella, p. 72.

34. The story of the King Triśaṅku who remained suspended between heaven and earth is told in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Bāla-Kāṇḍa, ch. 57-59, etc.

35. *Parātrīśikā Laghuvṛtti*, p. 7, ll. 5-7, tr. P. Muller-Ortegr, The Triadic Heart, p. 211.

36 Tr. p. 98 modified, Skt. p. 39.

37. Tr. p. 99, Skt. p. 39: *svasaṁvidi ca saṁvida eva sarvamayatvaprathanāt*.

38. Cf. Torella, art. cit., p. 73.

consciousness.[39] Just as the entire scheme of emanation has two movements, one of expansion (*prasāra*) and the other of retraction (*saṁhāra*), or of descent from the plane of Śiva to the Earth, and of ascent in the opposite direction (which is the ultimate purpose of all external manifestations), so the levels of the seven perceivers (*pramātā*) can be seen from above, in descending order, or from below, in order of ascension.[40] The correlation between the levels of emanation and the *pramātā*s is clearly that the realities (*tattva*) exist and are perceived by subjects or cognisers, and these correspond to the respective levels of awareness. Hence Kṣemarāja says:

> *tannānā anurūpa-grāhya-grāhakabhedāt* ।
> — *Pratyabhijñā Hṛdaya*, Sūtra 3

> That (i.e. the universe) is manifold because of the differentiation of reciprocally adopted objects and subjects.
> — Tr. Jaideva Singh, p. 52

Since Kṣemarāja gives a concise exposition of the correlation between the seven perceivers and their place in the scheme of the *tattva*s, it will be useful to cite his auto-commentary on this Sūtra:

Commentary

> "*Tat* (that) means the universe; *nānā* means manifold. Why (manifold)? Because of the differentiation between objects and subjects which are *anurūpa*, i.e. in a state of reciprocal adaptation."
>
> [The correspondence or reciprocal adaptation of object and subject now follows.]
>
> Just as in the Sadāśiva principle (there is the experience of), the total universe as an object of the nature of *parāpara*, i.e. both identical and different (a stage in which the experience is of the form "I am this"), (in which) the experience is dominated by the Consciousness of I, and (in which the experience of) this-ness is (yet) incipient, even so there is the group of experients, called *mantramaheśvara*s who are governed by the blessed Lord Sadāśiva, and whose existence in that state is brought about by the will of the highest Lord.

39. Cf. S. Vasudeva, The Yoga . . . , pp. 151-78.

40. Cf. Kṣemarāja, *Pratyabhijñā Hṛdaya*, *sūtra* 3 and commentary.

Just as in the Īśvara *tattva* (principle), the entire universe is apprehended (in the form, "I am this") where both the consciousness of I and that of this are simultaneously distinct, even so is (the consciousness of) the group of individual experients, (known as) *mantreśvara*, governed by venerable Īśvara.

In the stage of *vidyā* or *śuddha-vidyā*, just as there are the experients, called *mantra*s, of different states together with many secondary distinctions, governed by Anantabhaṭṭāraka, even so there is as an object of knowledge one universe whose sole essence consists of differentiations.

Above *māyā* (and below *śuddha-vidyā*) are the experients, called Vijñānākalas who are devoid of (the sense of) agency, and who are of the nature of pure awareness. Corresponding to them is their object of knowledge or field of experience which is identical with them in their previous states of existence.

At the stage of *māyā* (are), the experients of void or *pralayakevalin*s whose field of experience consists of the insensible which is quite appropriate to their state.

(After the *pralayākala*s) are stationed the *sakala*s (from *māyā* up to the earth) who are different from everything and limited, and whose field of experience is as limited and different as themselves.

Śivabhaṭṭāraka, however, who transcends all these (i.e. all the experients from Mantramaheśvara to Sakala), who is constituted only of *prakāśa* (light) has states or modes which are only of the form of *prakāśa* (light, i.e. consciousness). Again in blissful Paramaśiva (highest Śiva) who both transcends the universe and is the universe, who is the highest bliss and consists of a mass of *prakāśa* (light, i.e. consciousness) flashes the entire universe from Śiva down to the earth in identity (with Paramaśiva). Actually (in that state), there is neither any other subject nor object. Rather what is practically meant to be stated is this that in actuality the highest blissful Śiva alone manifests himself in this way in numerous forms of multiplicity.

— *Pratyabhijñā Hṛdaya*, tr. Jaideva Singh, pp. 52-54

Tattvas and Pramātās

Tattvas Levels of Reality	*Pramātā* Perceivers/Experients	*Avasthā* States of Awareness	*Śakti*
Śiva	Śiva	*turīyātīta*	*Cit*
Śakti		Beyond the Fourth	*Ānanda*
Sadāśiva	Mantramaheśvara	the Fourth State	
Īśvara	Mantreśvara	(*turīya*)	*Icchā*
Śuddhavidyā	Mantra		*Jñāna*
[Mahāmāyā]	Vijñānākala		
Māyā	Pralayākala	Deep Sleep (*suṣupti*)	
			Kriyā
Kañcukas		Dream (*svapna*)	
Puruṣa to Kalā	Sakala		
Pṛthivī to Prakṛti		Waking (*jāgrat*)	

The Five Brahmas

Another important group of phonemes consists of the last five consonants, the sibilants termed *pañcabrahma*,[41] "the five Brahmas," i.e. *śa, ṣa, sa, ha, kṣa*, corresponding in ascending order to the levels of reality: Mahāmāyā — Śuddhavidyā — Īśvara — Sadāśiva — Śakti. This is the transition from the impure to the pure course of *tattvas*, and hence of special significance. Since *māyā* has been included as a *kañcuka*, *mahāmāyā* takes its place, which in the group of *pramātās*, corresponds to the level of *pralayākala*. It is only beginning with *śuddha-vidyā* that the perceivers can ascend from *mantra* to Mantramaheśvara.

Why they are called five Brahmas is explained by a *nirvacana* of the word:

> They are known as *Brahma* because the root *bṛh* from which the word *brahma* is derived means "to grow great" and "to make grow." These categories are called *brahma* firstly because they transcend difference (*bhedasamuttīrṇatvāt*) (from the point of view of *bṛhatva* "growing great") and secondly because they bring about the production of the universe of differentiation. — p. 102

The five *Brahmas* traditionally refer to the five faces of Śiva and their respective

41. This terminology is specific to *PT* v. 7, cf. A. Sanderson, *History through Textual Criticism*, p. 37, note 47.

mantras.[42] This assumes importance in the encoding of the core *mantra* in verse 10 and its commentary (*tṛtīyaṁ brahma*). Whenever he explains *brahma* in the context of the Tantra, Abhinavagupta emphasises the *nirvacana* connoting its dynamic, expanding nature and its pervasiveness (*vyāpakatva*) over the static interpretation in Vedānta, because the spiritual ascent starts from *śuddha-vidyā*.

Abhinavagupta further defends the ascending order of *tattvas* from earth up to Śakti, based on other Tantras such as *Mālinīvijayottara, Svacchanda*, etc. (p. 102, p. 41 Skt.).

In his commentary on verses 5-9 Abhinavagupta has left no aspect of language out namely, sound, phonematic creation, correlation between phonemes and spheres of the universe, and initially, *mantra*. Before we proceed with this description, a digression on the more general theme of sound and language will be useful to connect to practical experience, as Abhinavagupta himself does time and again.

The Universality of Sound: *Nāda* and *Svara*

Abhinavagupta does not miss any occasion to bridge the gap between Āgama and ordinary experience, thus establishing the universality of the insights of the Tantra, the contrary of taking recourse to a purely esoteric sphere far removed from the world. In this sphere of language and *mantra*, his basic insights into sound are revealing. The starting point is always a possible objection, one being the limitation of phonemes or sounds to the fifty *mātṛkās* of the Sanskrit alphabet (cf. p. 178), and connected with it is the question of inarticulate or meaningless sounds. In the background lies the question of *mantra* and the apparent meaninglessness of certain (mainly *bīja*) *mantras* (cf. p. 178), an objection which has been raised at his time and even now! To the last question he gives a truly aesthetic and psychological reply:

> If it is said that certain phonemes are separate from *mātṛkā*, and being indistinct and meaningless, they are useless, therefore, they should not be accepted, we say that this is not correct. There is usefulness even of an indistinct phoneme, such as the sound of a

42. These faces are: Īśāna, Tatpuruṣa, Sadyojāta, Vāmadeva and Aghora. Cf. J. Hanneder, *Abhinavagupta's Philosophy of Revelation*, pp. 12-16.

> *muraja* (a kind of drum) or of an ocean[43] inasmuch as it is helpful in bringing about joy or sorrow. — p. 178

Besides, there are inner sounds perceived by *yogīs* such as the sound of a bell or cymbal, and powerful *mantras* uttered by *yoginīs* (p. 178, quotation from *Guhyayoginī Tantra*). In a nutshell, Abhinavagupta states about the essence of *mantra*:

> *vastutastu āntara evāsau nādātmā mantra*
> — p. 65, 3rd line from below
>
> In fact, it is the inner sound that is *mantra*.

> *Mahāmantras* which have distinct and meaningful phonemes can be easily used both by you and us. — p. 178

Relating these statements together it is clear that sounds, whether of *mantras*, natural sources such as the waves of an ocean, or music, have a strong effect on the mind.

He gives the beautiful example of the cooing of birds and the sounds produced by different animals (pp. 178 f.):

> When those indistinct phonemes also (i.e. the *asphuṭa varṇa* or indistinct phonemes like those of birds, etc.) acquire the status of words which have perfectly clear meaning like distinct phonemes (*varṇānāmiva*), then according to the principle mentioned, the cooing of birds and even the sounds of kettledrum, etc. become full of meaning. Then as the cooing of birds has some meaning, even so the sound of drum may be indicative of either conquest or defeat. — p. 179

According to Patañjali's[44] *Yogasūtra*, the *yogī* has the power to understand the sounds of all beings (*sarvabhūta-rutajñāna*, p. 66, l. 3), because he has access to the

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43. Cf. also *Lakṣmī Tantra* 57.14-15 where the sound of an ocean, of a river, and a mountain cave is called *avyakta*, unmanifest (corresponding to *asphuṭa* in the *PTV*, indistinct).

44. *Yogasūtra* 3.17: *śabdārtha-pratyayānām itaretara-adhyāsāt saṁkaras-tatpravibhāga-saṁyamāt sarvabhūtaruta-jñānam*. Interestingly, the *Vyāsabhāṣya* does not give a logical or metaphysical justification for this kind of knowledge, which can be better explained in the context of the four levels of *vāk*.

supreme level of the Word. These examples go to show the connectedness of all sounds, whether as distinct phonemes in the fifty letters of *mātṛkā*, or as indistinct sounds, with the level of *parāvāk*:

> Therefore, though the condensation of the phonemes becomes distinct only in the *vaikharī* or gross aspect, yet it abides primarily in the supreme Verbum (*parāvāk*) which is all inclusive (*sarvasarvātmaka*).
> — p. 176

In one of the decisive statements getting to the essence of the phonemes, of sound, of *mantra*, Abhinavagupta summarises:

> So by this repeatedly thought-out reasoning, entering more and more in the interior, cherish that consciousness which is a mass of awareness and is all-inclusive, and therefore the abode of guttural and labial energies (also), and in which inheres that creative I-consciousness, viz. *ahaṁ* which is the very quintessence of autonomy, which is the venerable phoneme, the highest *mantra*, and is (always) inherent within. — p. 177

> Therefore one and the same venerable supreme Verbum (*ekaiva parābhaṭṭārikā*), being all-inclusive, abides as the highest Lord in all, whether stone, tree, animal, man, god, Rudra, *pralayākala* or *vijñānākala* (*kevalī*), Mantra, Mantreśvara, Mantramaheśvara and others. Therefore, *Mātṛkā* whose body consists of letters (and sounds) which reside in various stations as their very soul either in indistinct (*asphuṭa*) or imperceptible (*avyakta*) way as in *madhyamā* or in distinct (*sphuṭa*) or perceptible (*vyakta*) way as in *vaikharī* is declared as the efficacious potency of *mantra* (*mantravīrya*). — p. 177

Another important example for the power and effect of sound is music, of which Abhinavagupta is an acknowledged master. He gives the example of different instruments, different kinds of *vīṇā* and drums (p. 177 last para - 178), producing the same note (*sthāyī svara*) in different registers.

He plays with the double meaning of *svara* as (musical) sound and vowel and gives it the highest meaning again by a *nirvacana*, splitting the word into *sva* and *ra*:

> So these *kalās*, i.e. the phonemes *a*, etc. of *anuttara* are called *svara* on account of their revealing the delightful mental state. The

> etymological explanation of *svara* is as follows. The root *svṛ* means (i) those which utter a sound (*śabdayanti*), i.e. indicate a delightful mental mode (*sūcayanti cittaṁ*) and (ii) which (in the state of withdrawal) yield their essential nature to Śiva, the highest subject (*svaṁ ca svarūpam ātmānaṁ rānti*), i.e. which dissolve completely in *anuttara*. Thus the word *svaraḥ* means those which transmitting their essential nature to the highest experient (i.e. *anuttara*) offer themselves, i.e. get dissolved in *anuttara* (as vowels) (in the aspect of *saṁhāra* or withdrawal) and offer their form as consonants like *ka*, etc., i.e. display (existents) externally (in the aspect of *prasāra* or expansion). — p. 188

The entire aesthetic or *rasa* experience is evoked by sound, whether spontaneous or musical:

> These *svaras* as mere sounds (*nādātmakāḥ*) are indicative of mental modes like pathos (*karuṇa*), the amatory sentiment (*sṛṅgāra*), contentment (*śānta*), by means of lamentation, pleasing words, laudatory expressions respectively either merely by themselves or by penetrating consonants. They display mental modes even of animals, a-day-old creatures by appearing suddenly, without the slightest trace of any hindrance of conventional sign, etc. and by acquiring the form of exclamatory enunciation (*svarakākvādirūpatām aśnuvānāḥ*), since they are so close to direct feeling. Thus *udātta*, etc. have been taught as having the characteristic of expressiveness. They are indicative of mental mode by means of musical notes, such as *ṣaḍjā*, etc. — p. 189[45]

In the *Tantrāloka* Abhinavagupta distinguishes three types of sound: the gross, the subtle, and the supreme (3.237). The *sthūlapaśyantī* "has the nature of sound which is beautiful with musical notes, without any division in phonemes" (3.237-38). He gives the example of the sound of drums which belongs to the realm of *sthūlamadhyamā*, and which is "close to consciousness" (*tadasyāṁ nādarūpāyāṁ saṁvitsavidha vṛttitaḥ*, 3.239). It is these musical sounds which have the power to evoke an aesthetic delight of merging in the source of the sound (3.240-41).

45. Here Abhinavagupta replies implicitly to the question raised even today in the context of aesthetics, whether pure, i.e. instrumental music can evoke specific *rasas*. Cf. P.L. Sharma, *Indian Aesthetics and Musicology*, Varanasi: Amnaya Prakashan, 2000, chapters on "Levels of Aesthetic Experience in Music" and "Rasa Theory and Indian Music" (pp. 93-108).

The Question of the Plurality of Languages

One of the main problems faced by the theory of the alphabet is the difference obtaining in various Tantras, their *mantras*, and in a more general sense, the different languages with their various meanings. In the context of the three grammatical persons there is already a reference to different languages such as Pāli and Draviḍian languages, and to the question of understanding (p. 74). In this context Abhinavagupta states the basis of any language and its grammar thus: "It is only this state of complete understanding, the essence of the residual traces of the innate, perfect I-consciousness which is followed by the grammarians in their descriptive rules" (p. 74). And language "originally follows the instructive feeling of the heart" (ibid. *vacana kramaśca hārdīmeva pratītiṁ mūlato 'nusaran tatpratītirasarūpatayā*, p. 27).

The basic distinction is between language as *convention* based on *māyā* (*māyīya*, i.e. contrived) where there is a difference between word and meaning, and *mantra* as non-conventional embodying the reality expressed, where there is identity between word and meaning. First the question arises why different Tantras contain different *mantras* and *Parātrīśikā* is unique in some ways (cf. pp. 104-5). In conventional languages which are the creations of human fancy, the same word sometimes indicates varying senses. Not without a sense of humour, Abhinavagupta gives the following example:

> For instance the southerners designate "boiled rice" with the word *caura*, and the inhabitants of Sindha designate "thief" with the same word, and "boiled rice," they designate with the word *krūra*. The Kāśmīrīs, however, indicate with that word (i.e. *krūra*) husked barley, wheat and rice. — p. 105

The plethora of linguistic conventions does not end there:

> If one has to depend on convention only, then will arise the problem of endless conventions coming down from one's own Śāstra, from another Śāstra, popular conventions, conventions of particular assemblies, conventions coming down from a host of teachers, convention particular for each different person and so on. This problem will also have to be examined. — p. 105

In the case of any difficulty in reconciling various concepts, Abhinavagupta takes the reader back to the stage of the Supreme Word:

> Therefore, thinking carefully on this matter, stay quiet, while I remove the difficulties involved.
>
> This question-answer in its entirety — not partially — resides really in the divine *parāvāk* (the cosmic Ideation) whose quintessence is autonomy (*svātantrya*) which is independent of everything, which is unsurpassable and is able to bring what is most difficult to accomplish, and which is not affected even by an iota of dependence on others. — p. 108

He returns to the question of multiplicity and the relation between the conventional, empirical language and the non-conventional, mantric aspect of it where the difference between symbol and symbolised is transcended. It is the same as the difference between *vikalpa* and *nirvikalpa*. The following is the course of his arguments:

> There is such a method of the entrance into the supreme consciousness everywhere. Whether in *jñānaśakti* (*saṅkalpyamānaḥ*) or in *kriyāśakti* (*kriyamānaḥ*), every object rests on the superb splendour of the *mantra* of supreme verbum, viz. the pure, creative I-consciousness (*vimarśātma*) which is one's essential nature (*svarūpabhūta*) and which is non-*māyīya* (non-empirical) and unconventional (*asāṁketika*). It is that state which is lauded by all the schools of philosophy as indeterminate (*nirvikalpa*). That splendour of the supreme *mantra* (*paramantramahaḥ*) is present in the earth category, etc. both in unmixed or mixed states in the form of vowels (*bīja*) and consonants (*piṇḍa*) in phonemes like *ka*, etc. Otherwise there would have been no difference between the determinate different pairs of knowledge, such as Meru-mountain and Jujube fruit, water and fire, jar (an external experience) and their indeterminate knowledge. — p. 180

The basis for differentiation lies equally in the supreme level of the Word:

> The fact is that *mantra* (of I-consciousness or *parāvāk*) which transcends all conventionality is taught as the object of worship by the all-knowing teachers even when they know that the *mantra* is the source of all the mutually distinctive conventions. It is, indeed, in that non-

conventional splendour of the supreme verbum (*vāṅmahasi*), i.e. into *aham* (I) that all empirical (*māyīya*) conventional symbols so terminate that they, i.e. the *māyīya* (empirical) symbols attain identity with that transcendental, non-conventional *mantra*, viz., *aham*. The only signification of those empirical (*māyīya*) conventional symbols consists in the attainment of the experience of the essential nature of the non-conventional, there is no other significance of these symbols. — p. 180

tathā ca yadeva tadasāṁketikaṁ mantravapuḥ, tadeva anyonya-vicitrarūpaṁ paśyadbhiḥ sarvajñaiḥ saṁketopāyam-upāsyatayā upadiśyate | *tatraiva cāsāṁketike vāṅmahasi tathā khalu māyīyāḥ saṁketāḥ patanti* | *yathā ta evāmāyīyāsaṁketitamantratādātmyaṁ pratipadyante* | *tathā svarūpa pratipattireva hi teṣāṁ vācakatābhāvo nānyaḥ kaścit* | — pp. 66-67

He thus establishes the relatedness between the conventional language and the supreme level which is the sphere of *mantra*.

In the context of the description of vowels and consonants symbolised by *bīja* (seed) and *yoni* (womb), Abhinavagupta makes a powerful statement about the difference between mystical/mantric language and language as an object of the study of grammarians:

If there is union of *bīja* (germ) in the form of vowels with the womb in the form of consonants, in other words, if there is the homogeneous union of Śiva and Śakti, then what a pleasant surprise; without any effort, without tilling and sowing will be generated both *bhoga* (enjoyment) and *mokṣa* (liberation).

The *bīja-varṇa* or vowel is adequate in itself and the *yoni-varṇa* or the consonant is equally so. Therefore, which is the cause and which the effect? Such argument does not disturb us who are making a statement about consciousness which is teeming with infinite variety. Even in worldly dealings dominated by *māyā*, speech which imparts clarity to the successive letters and words and, being of the nature of light, brings about thinking and has the nature of bringing about a unified sense (*ekaparāmarśasvabhāvaiva*). By others (the followers of other doctrines and the grammarians) this, i.e. the supreme consciousness (*parāsaṁvid*) has been proved by laboured deliberation. In this system, it is established effortlessly to those who earnestly take to its teaching. Therefore, we do not insist on one's going to

> the house of a teacher of grammar, the only gain of which will be a little refinement of speech. — pp. 122-23

We shall return to this distinction when considering *Mātṛkā* and *Mālinī*.

In order to prove this point of the descent of *Vāk* from the highest level (*parā*), through the Visionary (*paśyantī*) and the Intermediary (*madhyamā*) down to embodied speech (*vaikharī*) Abhinavagupta takes recourse to the example from life, that of a child learning language.[46]

> In a new-born child even when the vocal organs are not yet developed, the subtle form of *vaikharī* inheres in *madhyamā* by which he is able to associate heard word and seen object by means of an inner, subtle, unmanifest implicit proto-language.
>
> It has also to be admitted that the constituent elements of *vaikharī* are present in his mind in an implicit form for without these, he could not have been able to have even an implicit form of language and without this he could not have been able to associate the seen object and the heard word.
>
> If it be said that it is *madhyamā* itself that becomes distinguished by the difference resulting from such development, we may ask how? Let us discuss this point carefully.
>
> The child hears the words and sees the objects and thus develops his acquisition of language. He mentally lays hold on the words heard. The words heard are of the level of *vaikharī* (articulate speech). In regard to these words, he is like one born blind in regard to forms. (He hears the sounds but does not know what they refer to.) Therefore, *vaikharī* constituted by speech organs and articulation certainly inheres in *madhyamā*. — pp. 155-56

If children have the capacity of learning a language, it is thanks to the higher levels of the Word, which means to a consciousness transcending the conventional language.

> Even in a child, there is at first the predominance of only *cit* (pure, unconditioned consciousness). Therefore, even in the present life

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46. The topic of children learning language had occupied earlier thinkers, e.g. in Mīmāṁsā, Bhartṛhari, etc.

after a previous one, there exists in him a consciousness which transcends conventionality. Otherwise there would be no support for his conventionality to stay. So it is on the basis of the non-conventional that there can be the possibility of the comprehension of the conventional, not otherwise. — p. 181[47]

These considerations lead to the encompassing topic of the four levels of the Word, the major hermeneutic scheme applied to the entire text.

The Four Levels of the Word (Vāk)

The hermeneutical scheme of the four levels of *Vāk*[48] has such a centrality for the entire understanding of the text that Abhinavagupta unfolds it right at the beginning of the *Vivaraṇa*.[49] It covers all the aspects, the metaphysical, the development of language at all levels, the descent (and ascent) of consciousness, the cosmogonic, as it is homologised with the *tattva*s. In the introductory passage, actually defining *Devī*, the overall thrust of the *Vivaraṇa* is contained.

The Śakti which is full of the thought of Grace for the entire world is, to begin with, non-different (in the undifferentiated or *nirvikalpa* state) from *paśyantī* who is *parāmarśamayī*, i.e. who is always cognisant of the essential nature of the Divine and who has a hundred powers which are boundless in operation which however will be described later. She (the Supreme *vāk*) is, in the most initial stage, stationed in the Divine I-consciousness which is the highest *mantra* and which is not limited by space or time. In that stage (*parā-vāk*) abides without any distinction of question and answer which will start in *paśyantī*.

The *parāvāk* which is non-dual, i.e. identical with the (supreme) consciousness is present in all experients always in her integral nature (of knowership and doership) uniformly in all states, i.e. even at the level of *paśyantī*, *madhyamā* and *vaikharī*. Therefore, *paśyantī* comprehends in a general indeterminate (*nirvikalpa*) way whatever

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47. *yāvat bālasyāpi janmāntarānusāraṇe 'pi citsvabhāvasyādau sthitaivāsāṅketikī sattā-anyathānavasthānāt* | — p. 67, ll. 5-7.

48. I refer to the excellent chapter on this theme in A. Padoux, *Vāc*, pp. 166-222, therefore, I am not elaborating it except in relation to the *Vivaraṇa*.

49. Again, it is surprising that the *Laghuvṛtti* does not refer to such a central doctrine and does not apply it to the interpretation of the Tantra.

is desired to be known if it is awakened by due causal conditions just as one who has experienced variegated colours like dark, blue, etc. as in a peacock's tail and whose experience is determined by many impressions, positive and negative, recalls only that particular colour which is awakened by the proper causal condition of the memory. At the time of initial indeterminate knowledge in *paśyantī* in which there is no distinction in the word and its referent, there was obviously not any sense of difference between the word and its referent.

Madhyamā, however, which shows the difference between the word and its referent is concerned with its comprehension only in the same location (*sāmānādhikaraṇya*), i.e. in the *antaḥkaraṇa* or the inner psychic apparatus. In *vaikharī*, on the other hand, there is a clear difference between the two, i.e. between the word and its referent.

When this regular, fixed relation of the word and its referent (*vyavasthāyāṁ*) is proved in one's own experience, it will be found that what is the stage of *parā vāk* is the power of non-*māyīya* word and is of the nature of the highest truth. It is unconventional (*asāṁketika*), natural (*akṛtaka*), having as its essence the stamp of the highest truth, and is inspired by the truth of the energy of the *mantra* of I-consciousness, the principle of which will be described in the sequels.

She abides in the subsequent conditions of *paśyantī*, etc. also, for without her there would accrue the condition of non-manifestation, in *paśyantī*, etc. and thus would arise the contingency of absolute insensateness (*jaḍatā*).

In that stage (i.e. in the *parāvāk* stage), there is absolutely no thought of difference such as "this" (a particular entity or individual), "thus" (a particular form), "here" (particular space), and "now" (particular time). Therefore, beginning with *paśyantī* which is the initial creative state of the energy of the highest *mantra*, up to *vaikharī* in which manifestation of difference of all the existents has proceeded fully, this *parāvāk* full of the wondrous delight of her own self, resting within her own self which is all Light, continues pulsating (*sphurati*). That pulsation is I-consciousness whose highest truth is uninterrupted continuity. This matter will be clarified further on. In that (*parāvāk*) alone, in the *paśyantī* stage in which there is just an

> incipience of difference, in the *madhyamā* state in which there is an appearance of difference (inwardly in the psychic apparatus), which consists specifically of *jñāna* (knowledge) and *kriyā* (activity) respectively — *jñāna* which is the predominant attribute of Sadāśiva and *kriyā* which is the predominant attribute of Īśvara, the wondrous delight of I-consciousness which encloses within itself the joy of objective existence of innumerable universes is fully operative. Therefore, Supreme Consciousness even while appearing as *paśyantī* and *madhyamā* actually experiences Herself as the Supreme Consciousness. It is this Supreme Consciousness (*parā saṁvid*) that is said to be "Devī" (goddess). — pp. 8-9

We have already encountered many of the themes contained in this passage. Since the entire text is dedicated to *Anuttarā Parā*, the primordial stage of the Word is much more than a stage, as A. Padoux emphasised:

> So this is indeed *parāvāc* — this supreme essence of Speech divine in nature, wherein are grounded ontologically, logically, and (as we shall see) archetypally, all that expresses and all that is to be expressed — that provides the basis both for the reality of the universe and the validity of its cognisance through speech.
>
> — A. Padoux, *Vāc* p. 187

The dynamism of this Divine Word in its descending (*sṛṣṭikrameṇa*, p. 3) is again and again expressed by verbs such as *sphurati* (p. 2), "luminous vibrating," *ullāsa*, "shining forth, radiating," etc. It is this very basic dynamism which brings forth the phonemes and the corresponding *tattva*s:

> In the apprehension of the highest consciousness (*paramātmani parāmarśe*), all the categories of existence are only of the nature of consciousness (i.e. they are all Śiva). The supreme truth of that apprehension is the expansion of *śakti* from *ka* to *kṣa*. Therefore, in the highest consciousness (*parā*) there is complete absence of difference. In *parāparā*, there is non-difference in difference according to the principle of reflection. When the *parāparā* state which has the form of a garland of letters from *ka* to *kṣa* holds as reflection the categories existing in *parā* which is situated at a level higher than itself, then of the non-*māyīya*, inaudible (to the gross sense), supreme *ka* to *kṣa* letters, the categories (*tattvāni*) acquire a reversal of order,

> i.e. the upper becomes lower and the lower upper. The sense is that this happens through the power of the nature of the original (*bimba*) which is in the upper level, acquiring a lower level in reflection. So in the statement that "there is *pṛthvī tattva* in *kṣa*" there is no contradiction, from the point of view of that which is to be purified and the purifier. Because of the invariable continuity of the *parā* state, even in that, i.e. even in *parāparā* state there is the continuous succession of *ka* and other letters (*kādivarṇasantānaḥ*). — pp. 120-21

We shall come to the theme of *bimba-pratibimba* later.

That even the most external expression of speech, at the level of *vaikharī*, "the embodied one," is inherently connected to the supreme level, is explicitly stated by Abhinavagupta.

> Therefore, though the condensation of the phonemes becomes distinct only in the *vaikharī* or gross aspect, yet it abides primarily in the supreme verbum (*parāvāk*) which is all-inclusive (*sarvasarvātmaka*).
>
> In that (i.e. in *parā*), even the organs of speech (*sthāna*) such as throat, lips and manner of articulation (*karaṇa*) are all-inclusive. This is the special point to be noted. Even inwardly one mutters and envisions. This is a matter of distinct experience. Their difference is due to the various organs of utterance, for audition is the very life of the letters.[50]
> — p. 176

The relationship of the *tattvas* with the stages of the Word was already contained in the first passage cited. In the order of creation (*sṛṣṭikrama*), Sadāśiva occupies an important position, and the symbolism will be shown in an image. His level corresponds to *paśyantī*, "the Visionary Word" as the first movement towards manifestation, and it is related to *jñāna-śakti* of the Lord, sometimes also to his *icchā-śakti* (cf. p. 9). The next step down, where creativity is more pronounced, is the *tattva* of Īśvara, corresponding to *madhyamā*, "the Intermediary," and to *kriyā-śakti*, the power of activity. From *śuddha-vidyā* and *māyā* downwards the *tattvas* partake of the nature of *vaikharī*, "the Embodied Speech."

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50. *evaṁ ca ghanībhāvo 'pi vaikharīrūpe yadyapi sphuṭībhavati, tathāpi sarvasarvātmani parāvāgvapuṣi mukhyatayāvatiṣṭhate* | . . . , p. 64.

The Universe of Language —The Language of the Universe

Coming back to the emanation of phonemes and cosmotheandric elements, we have to look at some interrelated topics left out so far. One is the relationship of the two alphabet systems: *Mātṛkā* and *Mālinī*, with the corresponding *tattvas*. Since all vowels, as we have seen, belong to the realm of Śiva, it is only the consonants which are in correspondence with the *tattvas*.

VOWELS

In his interpretation of this section Abhinavagupta depends on the *Mālinīvijayottara*, so also as regards the symbolism of vowels and consonants:[51]

> Word and its referent can become universal if they are associated together by nature. Vowels which are of the nature of germ (*bīja*) and consonants which are of the nature of their receptacle (*yoni*) denote Śiva and Śakti respectively and, therefore, the former is denotative and the latter is the denotated. — p. 122

The symbolism of seed and womb has both an organic and a mystical implication: without the combination of both, no creativity takes place, no form is created; but since vowels are identical with Śiva and consonants with Śakti, it is their union which creates meaning (cf. Kālidāsa, *vāgarthau iva saṁpṛktau pārvatī parameśvarau* — *Raghuvaṁśam* 1.1). The creation of language, along with the creation of meaning and the creation of the universe are intertwined, and happens only by the integration of Śiva and Śakti. The mystical aspect is more prominent in the *Mālinī* arrangement, as we shall see.

The basic understanding is that the phonemes of the alphabet — whether of *Mātṛkā* or *Mālinī* — are divine powers or Śaktis: *mātṛkā* are "little mothers" because they create and engender, and *Mālinī*, "the garlanded one" is herself a Goddess.

The vowels have an inherent dynamism, all within the Śiva nature. We have already seen *a* as the *ādyavarṇa*, the original phoneme standing for *Anuttara*.

When the question of emanation arises, there is the appearance of a temporal succession, and Abhinavagupta hastens to add:

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51. Cf. *MVT* III.10, 12 quoted p. 122. These themes are fully enunciated in the *Tantrāloka* III, and in short form in *Tantrasāra* III.

In the *vimarśa-śakti* of Bhairava, this is no stain either of the appearance of succession or simultaneity. According to the precept referred to previously, viz. that time is only a thought construct, succession should be deliberated upon (*kramo vicāraṇīyaḥ*) in accordance with the fact that the very nature of the massive creative Self-consciousness (*vimarśaikaghana*) of the Supreme (*parābhaṭṭārikā*) gives rise to infinite, future absorptions and emanations and that there is an appearance of succession and non-succession (*kramākramāvabhāsaḥ*) in that nature of the Divine which is above both succession and simultaneity (*kramayaugapadyāsahiṣṇu*). As has been said: "Lord Bhairava is autonomous, perfect, whole and omnipresent. That which does not appear in the mirror of His Self does not exist." Non-succession can have its existence only in consciousness in which there is an appearance of both succession and non-succession (*akramasya tatpūrvakeṇa saṁvidyeva bhāvāt*), so succession has to be accepted for the sake of exposition. Since succession has its *ratio essendi* in consciousness only, all this mental grip in the form of speech is only succession (*sarva evāyaṁ vāgrūpaḥ kramika eva*). That grip which is of the inner consciousness is non-successive only. Thus the divine supreme Śakti (*parābhaṭṭārikā*) is always of this kind, i.e. multifarious and variegated (*vicitrā*). Therefore it is in accordance with succession, i.e. in order to indicate succession in non-succession, the grammarians have formed *at* by placing *t* after *a*. — p. 161

It is against this metaphysical backdrop that the manifestation of the phonemes, which is purely an expression of the Divine Power of Freedom, takes place. It is his Energies which take the form of the vowels, descending from *a*, i.e. *Anuttara*: Abhinavagupta develops the theme with his genial combination of metaphysics (manifestation of the Divine Energies), linguistics (all based on Sanskrit grammar), epistemology (aspects of knowledge), and psychology (the same stages of unfolding can be found in the individual consciousness). All these levels of understanding are dimensions of the Divine *vimarśa-śakti*. Thus in between the entire speculation he again admonishes his disciples/readers:

upasaṁharata bāhya vibhrama bhramaṇam tāvat ।
anupraviṣṭa sūkṣmām vimarśadevīm । — p. 59

Desist from wandering in the error of external appearance. Set out on the path of the Divine Power of subtle reflection. — p. 164

And he appeals to personal experience for verifying his explanation:

> *saṁvidaḥ svātantryam eva bhāvojjigamiṣātmakamīśanaṁ* ।
> *svasaṁvitpramāṇalabdhameva* ।　　　　— p. 59

> It is the autonomy of Consciousness only which, desirous of projecting objects, is known as *īśanā* or sovereignty. This is known by the testimony of one's own experience.　　　　— p. 164

The manifestation of the sixteen vowels as Divine Energies is described also in the *Tantrāloka* (and in a shorter version in the *Tantrasāra*), in the third *āhnika* in the context of *śāmbhavopāya* or the Divine Way. It is significant, because this kind of linguistic meditation on the very constituents of language and of the universe as well belongs to a high stage of yogic consciousness.[52] The topic is of immense spiritual magnitutde. We propose only to summarise to a certain extent,[53] and to show the specific contribution of the *Vivaraṇa*.

The vowels as *bīja*s are symbols or "abbreviations" of the Śaktis, and the first 16 manifestations of Śiva's "phonemic awareness" or *varṇaparāmarśa*, as translated by A. Padoux:

> This word denotes a synthetic awareness, of consideration, bringing together in a single act of consciousness the oneness of the agent of cognition (*pramātṛ*) that is, of the divine, absolute, consciousness which brings forth the universe, and the particularised forms of this universe, which, as we know, ever dwells in the knower. Thus the phonemic emanation will occur through a succession of fifty "phonemic awarenesses": *varṇaparāmarśa*, through which the supreme Śiva will become aware, and thereby bring forth fifty different aspects of his own energy, that of the Word, which he will apprehend both as being all different and yet dwelling all within him. *Parāmarśa* is thus the creative act itself.　　　　— *Vāc*, p. 228

The first three simple vowels: *a*, *i* and *u* are the fundamental constituents which expand and combine, according to the rules of Sanskrit grammar.

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52. Cf. *TĀ* III.108 cf. also III.77, it is the *yogins* only who discern this state of the beginning of differentiation.

53. I again refer to the relevant chapter in A. Padoux, *Vāc*, "The Phonematic Emanation", pp. 223-86 for the vowels only.

When *a* being *Anuttara* expands it becomes *ā* which stands for *ānanda*, bliss. The combination of *a* + *a* symbolises the union (*saṁghaṭṭa*) of Śiva and Śakti,[54] "from which the universe will be created." The second vowel is *i* standing for *icchā-śakti*, the energy of will, the first impulse arising in the heart of the Absolute towards creation.

> Thus the autonomy (*svātantrya-śakti*) of the Lord in the form of Will in which the manifestation of existents has not yet started (*anunmīlita-bhāva-vikāsā*) and the essence of which consists in an inner massive I-consciousness is designated *a*. That *svātantrya-śakti* (power of autonomy) abiding in the Transcendent (*anuttara*) is designated Will in which that which is to be willed has not yet become prominent. This will is only a state of consciousness of the transcendental being (*anuttara-sattā*). The highest Lord is always conscious of His own nature. He is *akula-śakti*. Though in being aware of His form, He makes use of *kula-śakti*, yet there is a distinction in the concept of *akula-śakti* from that of *kula-śakti*. *Akula* is the creative I-consciousness (*vimarśa sattā*) of Bhairava. That *svātantrya-śakti* expanding further is known as *ā* which denotes *ānanda-śakti*. Perfect *icchā* or Will is *i*. *Icchā* itself wishing to perceive (lit. to seize) the future *jñāna* or knowledge through its autonomy becomes *ī* which denotes *Īśāna* or sovereignty. *U* is the *unmeṣa* or appearance of *jñāna-śakti* which is the source of all objective existents desired to be known. — p. 162

But *icchā* also characterises the Divine way or *śāmbhavopāya*, consisting in the pure union of the *yogī* with divine Will. *Icchā* or *i* thus moves in both directions: towards manifestation in the case of the Divine, towards merging in the Divine (*samāveśa*) from the side of the practitioner. When *i* expands or is united with another *i*, emerges *ī* or *Īśāna*, sovereignty or lordship, which is an intensification or externalisation of pure *icchā*.

In the description of this expansion of vowels as acts of consciousness of the Divine, the verb *kṣubh* and *kṣobha* are used, both in the *Tantrāloka* and the *Vivaraṇa*, a term which usually has the negative implication of agitation, perturbance, disturbance. For instance in the *Spanda Kārikā* the supreme state is said to be

54. Cf. *TĀ* III.68.

attained "when agitation ceases."[55] But in the context of a movement of expansion *kṣobha* denotes the stir or creative agitation.[56]

> If one reflects on the essential nature of *anuttara* (*a*); *ānanda* (*ā*); (*akṣubdha* or calm) *icchā*; (*kṣubdha* or perturbed *icchā*), i.e. *īśāna* (*ī*); (*akṣubdha* or calm *jñāna*) *unmeṣa* (*u*); (*kṣubdha* or perturbed *jñāna*) *ūnatā* (*ū*) — one will find that the above six phonemes rest in the indivisible plane of consciousness, i.e. *anuttara* or *a* phase as their base and that these divinities, the (six) energies of consciousness (though appearing separately) are not separate from their basic essential nature (*ananyā eva sva-saṁvidaḥ*), for being perfect, there is no difference in their nature. — p. 164

According to the five *śakti*s of the Supreme, *cit*, *ānanda*, *icchā*, the last two are *jñāna* and *kriyā*. The third simple (non-agitated) vowel is *u*, which stands for *unmeṣa*, "awakening": "*u* is the *unmeṣa* or appearance of *jñāna-śakti* which is the source of all objective existents desired to be known" (p. 162, Skt. p. 59). The intensification of *unmeṣa* or *jñāna-śakti* leads to objectivisation, and hence to a diminution of consciousness:

> When *unmeṣa* or the arising of knowledge (*unmiṣattā*) has, in consciousness, the desire for further objectivity (*unmimiṣatāyām*), the transcendental consciousness becomes diminished (*ūnibhūta anuttarasaṁvit*) owing to contraction (*saṅkocavaśena*) which is due to all forms lying within or tending to assume subsequent objectivity (*antaḥprāṇa sarvasvarūpa-unmeṣottaraika-rūpairapi*) and to the multitude of existents which lie within as nearly objective, in which the aspect of difference is almost indistinct and which are tending to appear objectively (*antaḥkaraṇa-vedyadeśiya-asphuṭa-prāyabhedāṁśa-bhāsanānabhāva-rāśibhiḥ*). This reduced consciousness, because of its retention within itself of all objectivity (*sarvabhāvagarbhīkāreṇa*), is like the udder of the wish-fulfilling celestial cow, viz. the *parāśakti* (*anaṅga-dhainavīrūpā-paradevatāyāḥ-ūdhorūpā*), and upholding the multitude of entire

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55. *SpKā* I.9: *yadā kṣobhaḥ pralīyeta tadā syāt paramaṁ padam.*

56. Cf. *TĀ* III.82-90. "The nature of the seed consists in being the cause of stirring, the nature of the womb in being the receptacle (*ādhāra*)." (v. 82ab). He further defines *kṣobha*: "It is the nature of consciousness to cause a stir. It is itself stirred and causes to stir. *Kṣobha* is the nature of the knowable (object), and by stirring it (consciousness) gets externalised" (82bc-83ab).

> objectivity, becomes manifest (*sphuṭa*), wide-spreading *jñāna-śakti*, i.e. *ū*. — pp. 162-63

This stage is represented by *ū* identified with *ūnatā*, diminution. In the *Tantrasāra* Abhinavagupta uses the speaking term *ūrmi* for *ū*: "wave," because it is the agitated state of the calm ocean of awakening or *unmeṣa*.[57]

> Thus *svātantrya-śakti* (the power of autonomy) in the form of *icchā* (will) resting in its own *ānanda* (bliss) is designated *mahāsṛṣṭi*.[58] — p. 163

Abhinavagupta clearly shows that this movement is not only tending towards manifestation, but also in the converse sense, towards absorption.

> By the separation of the multitude of objects, she becomes emaciated, as she is engaged in the manifestation and expansion of objects. Thus she is like the sun. Being identical with the essential nature of Bhairava, by the desire to withdraw the creative consciousness into Anāśrita Śiva (*kulasaṁvitsaṁjihīṣātmikā*), she is known as *jñāna-śakti* who has the tremendous power of withdrawal. Again, reviewing her former expanding form, she, within herself, looks for the previous state of her own transcendental consciousness, symbolised by moon (*soma*) with the disposition of the retention of the successive form of the sun and the moon. In an inverse state she looks for the aspect of the moon, the symbol of manifestation (*sṛṣṭi*) and the sun, the symbol of withdrawal (*saṁhāra*).
>
> In this changing state, now wishing *saṁhāra* and now wishing *sṛṣṭi*, *jñāna* and *icchā* sometimes tending towards expansion and sometimes not, one should not attribute the fallacy of non-finality (*na ca atrānavasthā iti vācyam*), for the expansion (*prasara*) and non-expansion (*aprasara*) go on changing their position. — p. 163

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57. Cf. *TS*, p. 13 *unmeṣa eva hi viśrāntir-ūrmiḥ yaḥ kriyāśakteḥ prārambhaḥ*, "Awakening" is the state of rest (calmness), (and) the "wave" is the beginning of the power of activity.

58. *Mahāsṛṣṭi* designates the totality of all creations, hence "the great emanation," in which everything is contained. Cf. p. 49 Skt. Cf. *MVV* 1.366-67. "Here [in our system] exists this great creation of Śiva which is replete and inside of which all other [cycles] of creation and resorption take place." (tr. J. Hanneder, p. 177).

Here again, the concept of "rest" (*viśrānti*) is important,[59] because in every case the expanded (or "agitated") form of the vowel and *Śakti* "rests," is in a calm state in its previous simple form.[60]

The last of the five energies is *kriyā-śakti*, the energy of activity:

> Impetuous eagerness is the essence of *kriyā*. Whatever intermixture occurs owing to the expansion of *kriyā-śakti* with something else, is due to the fact that *anuttara* (the Absolute) enters suddenly in a sphere of reality which is beyond mental grasp (*anāmarśanīya*), and void (i.e. the state of Anāśrita Śiva) just as a frog by a simple leap reaches another place from one place. The consciousness that is *anuttara* (*a*) and *ānanda* (*ā*) does not expand in the first four spheres (i.e. *ṛ, ṝ, ḷ, ḹ*) (*na prasarati*), of *kriyā-śakti*, for that is an unnamable (*anākhyā*) state, not being the object of name and form (*nāmarūpa*). — p. 165

This "leap," compared with the unexpected suddenness of a frog's jump, has various implications. The image is used, also by Indian grammarians,[61] to indicate a sudden change from one rule to the next without giving the intermediary one. Here the leap refers to a break in the unfolding of the energies and the related vowels. After *jñāna-śakti* should follow *kriyā-śakti*, but there is a gap in between. This gap is conditioned by the Sanskrit alphabet itself, but, and expectedly in the Tantra and in Abhinavagupta, it is given a very high mystical interpretation. Before *kriyā-śakti* manifests in the form of the composite vowels (*e, o, ai, au*), there is a state of void. This is represented by the four liquids *ṛ, ṝ, ḷ, ḹ* which are variously called *amṛta-bīja*, "immortal seeds," or neuter (*napuṁsaka*), compared to eunuchs, because they cannot produce anything, hence sterile. At the same time they are given the highest status:

> It enters the group of four phonemes (i.e. *ṛ, ṝ, ḷ, ḹ*) which are the ambrosial seeds inasmuch as they are the womb of immortality being the essential nature of Śiva. The I-consciousness in the form of *nāda* thrives here and attains maturity. — p. 135

59. Cf. A. Chakrabarti, The Heart of Repose . . . , in: *Sāmarasya*, pp. 27-36.

60. Cf. Skt. p. 61, etc.

61. Cf. reference given by R. Gnoli, p. 108 note 312, and p. 109 note 317.

The state of void, at the level of Anāśrita Śiva in the scheme of the *tattvas*, is at the same time a state of luminosity:

> Then that *kriyā-śakti* full of impetuous eagerness, penetrating into its own form (denoted by *ṛ, ṝ, ḷ, ḹ*) which is void (i.e. devoid of all manifestation), immerses at first into a luminous form which is *tejas* or fire (denoted by the experience of *ṛ*). Thus arise *ṛ* and *ṝ*. How can it be denied that in these letters, the energy of *icchā-śakti* (*i*) and that of *īśāna-śakti* (*ī*) are associated with the sound of *r* whose essential nature is luminosity. This is what the glorious Puṣpadanta says: "The *tejas* and mobility found in *ṛ, ṝ* are established with the general sound of *r*." — pp. 165-66

These four letters are seeds, but as though in a fried state, so that they cannot fructify:

> There is in them no total absence of germ, i.e. the state of a vowel. Nothing can exist which is neither germ nor womb which symbolise Śiva and Śakti, for the existence of any other thing has not been mentioned either in Pūrva Śāstra (*Mālinīvijaya*) or any other Śāstra. Even in worldly pleasures, there is felicity in repose of this kind. That is why this group of four letters is said to be the germ of immortality. — p. 166

There is a further mystical interpretation of these four letters in the context of the *mantra*, where again, they are called the "four voids" (*śūnya-catuṣka*) (p. 214).[62] There they indicate four stages of *vyomasamādhi* (p. 219 note by J.S.).

A. Padoux summarises this intricate subject as follows:

> The first six phonemes (*a, ā, i, ī, u, ū*) each conveniently provided the initial letter of a term (*anuttara, ānanda, icchā,* etc.) suitable to denote the aspects successively assumed by the energy, within Śiva, in order to initiate the process of manifestation. The four liquids, which are our present concern, are of no help for such a use: few — and in any case, no suitable — words begin with *ṛ*, and nearly none with *ṝ*, and *ḷ*; as for *ḹ*, its existence is purely theoretical. Hence it was even more difficult to vindicate the presence of these four phonemes

62. In the context of the *bīja mantra* the mystical meaning of the four "empty vowels" is given, cf. pp. 214-15.

> (which the *varṇasamāmnāya*, however, brings inevitably after *ū* and before the diphthongs) as stages of Śiva's inner evolution. As a result, intricate considerations, intermingling phonetics and cosmogony, are put forward in an attempt to demonstrate the necessity of inserting these four "sterile," "neuter," phonemes in the midst of the kinetic and vibrant creative movement of consciousness, as it is bringing forth the universe within itself. Abhinavagupta solves the problem by seeing in *ṛ, ṝ, ḷ* and *ḹ* a necessary stage for the initial impulse of consciousness (*icchā*), notably in its aspect of disturbance or stir (*kṣobha*). At that stage there must be a kind of pause in consciousness, which shines, then in four different forms, before it proceeds with its creative movement. — *Vāc*, pp., 254-55

It is after this gap or void that the energies resume their descending dynamism with *kriyā-śakti*, the power of activity, manifesting in the compound vowels: *e, o, ai, au*. These are, grammatically and metaphysically, a combination or merging of the first six vowels in various ways, such as: *anuttara* (*a*) and *icchā* (*i*) produce *e*,[63] *anuttara* and *unmeṣa* produce *o*, and their long forms combine to *ai* and *au*.[64] Thus fourteen vowels are manifested in the movement towards ever more pronounced (*sphuṭa*) activity and exteriority. But the last diphthong, *au*, assumes a special importance. It is called *śūla* or *triśūla* in the *Mālinīvijayottara* (cf. *MVT* 4.25), because in it the three powers (*icchā, jñāna, kriyā*) are equally present in a unity of essence (*sāmarasya*).[65] The *Vivaraṇa* describes this last state of the power of activity thus:

> *tathāhi aukāre eva kriyāśakti parispandaḥ parisamāpyate iti icchājñānayoratraivāntarbhāvāt । triśūlarūpatvam asya ṣaḍardhaśāstre nirūpitam ।*
> — p. 61

> Thus the subtle vibration of *kriyā-śakti* comes to an accomplishment in *au*, and since the energies of will and knowledge are included in it (*kriyā-śakti*), it (i.e. *au*) has been described in the *Trikaśāstra* as of the form of a trident (of the three energies). — p. 167

63. Abhinavagupta also distinguishes between a short and a long *e*, but we need not go into such details. Cf. pp. 164-65.

64. Cf. the shortest description in the *Tantrasāra*, pp. 13-15.

65. Cf. *TĀ* III.107.

Au again assumes importance in the context of the *hṛdaya-bīja* or the core *mantra* (see chapter 9).

Abhinavagupta emphasises once more the rootedness of all the vowels in the unsurpassable:

> That indeterminate consciousness (*nirvikalpa*) which is not yet limited by the cluster of objects, which is massive consciousness, perfect and whole, whose very being is autonomy is perfectly autonomous only because of its having within itself a mass of beatitude. Therefore the presence of *ānanda* (beatitude) in it cannot be gainsaid. *Anuttara* (*a*), the unsurpassable, the possessor of *śakti* or creative energy, who is beyond all appellation or description, whose essence is supreme amazement of beatitude, who is venerable Bhairava, of course, shines everywhere (i.e. both as Śiva from *a* to *aḥ* and as *jagat*, world from *ka* to *kṣa* as the autonomous active agent). — p. 164, Skt. p. 59

The last two of the sixteen *svaras* have a special significance, considering that the entire theory of the alphabet is the basis for *mantra*. Both, *anusvāra* or *bindu*, and *visarga*, are not really vowels, but they are the ending of vowels. Both terms are loaded with meaning outside the domain of grammar.

Bindu

Bindu,[66] dot, point, concentrated energy, drop of light, is called *anusvāra* in grammar, literally "following the vowel."[67] Being the simplest and most basic "letter," it arises in the following way:

> Thus *icchā* and *jñāna* (i.e. *i, ī, u, ū*) by entering the essential nature of *anuttara* (i.e. *a*) become developed, i.e. reach *au* which is symbolic of full development of *kriyā-śakti*. After this, they abandon the variation of those *śaktis*, and mounting to the state of non-difference, get immersed in the remaining form of a *bindu*, i.e. *aṁ*, a dot which

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66. Cf. the art. *Bindu* (H.N. Chakravarty) in : *Kalātattvakośa*, vol. 2, pp. 1-24. Cf. also A. Padoux, *Vāc*, pp. 105-14, 272-77.

67. The *Ratnatrayaparīkṣā* (70-71) gives the following synonyms of bindu: *śabdatattva* (essence of speech), *aghoṣā vāk* (unsounded word), *Brahman*, *kuṇḍalinī*, the stable one (*dhruva*), *vidyā* (knowledge), *śakti*, *parā nāda* (supreme sound), *mahāmāyā*, *vyoma* (void), and *anāhata* (unstruck sound).

> represents awareness (*vedanā*) of the very nature of the Reality that is pure consciousness (*cinmayapuruṣatattvasatattva*), and get immersed in the *anuttara* state. So they get dissolved in the state of *anuttara*.
>
> — p. 167

The dot or, phonetically, nasalisation, is something like a summary. "*Bindu* represents the remainder, viz. pure awareness only" (p. 168, *binduḥ punarvedanāmātraśeṣataiva*, p. 61). And pure awareness (*vedana* or *saṁvedana*) has one all-encompassing *mantra*: *ahaṁ*, "I" which terminates in *aṁ* or *bindu*, and embraces the entire reality from *a* to *ha*.[68]

In the context of the core *mantra*, one of the interpretations of Brahma reads:

> Brahma appearing in the innumerable forms of the external world is the *bindu* or dot (*anusvāra*). It is the *hṛdaya* or the very core of Reality, viz. Bhairava in his aspect of knowledge. — p. 217

The concept of *bindu* is a vast subject in the Tantras. We may only quote Kṣemarāja's *Śivasūtravimarśinī* where he summarises the two aspects:

> *iyatparyantaviśvaikavedanarūpaṁ bindumunmīlya yugapadantar-bahirvisarjanamaya bindudvayātmānaṁ visarga-bhūmimuddarśitavatī*
>
> — II.7

> Then the supreme I-consciousness expresses the undivided knowledge of the universe in the form of a dot (*bindu*) in the letter *aṁ*. It shows further the *visarga* stage in the form of two dots : indicating simultaneously inner and outer manifestation.
>
> — tr. Jaideva Singh, p. 107

Visarga

An equally multidimensional concept is that of *visarga*: in phonetics the final aspiration *ḥ*, represented by two dots : (both, in Śāradā and Devanāgarī scripts), in metaphysics the creative or emissive force.[69] A. Sanderson translates it by

68. The *Tantrasāra* presents *bindu* again in the briefest possible way: "When, at the end of the power of activity, the entire created world is about to enter into *Anuttara*, it first takes the form of awareness (*saṁvedana*), and because it is of the nature of light (*prakāśamātratvena*), it becomes *bindu*." (*TS*, pp. 14-15).

69. Cf. Padoux, *Vāc*, pp. 277-86.

"potential."[70] Since it is uttered by breathing out, it has to do with *prāṇa*. Actually both *bindu* and *visarga* represent the transition from sound to silence, either through nasalisation or through breathing out, hence they are ideally suited as endings of *bīja-mantras*, which contain a concentration of the Divine Word, but leading back to its source, *silence*.

Graphically *visarga* with its two dots is understood as a split of *bindu* : from unity to the dual aspect of Śiva and Śakti, and hence the very origin of creativity. Not by chance *visarga* stands at the limit between vowels (identified with Śiva) and consonants (identified with Śakti). Again, cosmologically speaking, the movement goes in both directions: towards manifestation, and back to the One: *Anuttara*.

> The consciousness symbolised by one phoneme, viz. *a*, i.e. the *anuttara* or transcendental consciousness indeed by its very nature transcends all concepts of space, time and causality and which, according to the previously stated principle, is wholly perfect, resorts instantly to the stage of *para-visarga*, i.e. the supreme stage of manifestation.
>
> It is only after connexion with the stage of *para-visarga*, i.e. the supreme creative élan, that there is the stance of *ānanda, icchā, īśāna, unmeṣa*, its expansion, i.e. *ūnatā* or *ū*, its diversity, i.e., *ṛ, ṝ, ḷ, ḹ* and the product of *kriyā-śakti*, viz. *e, ai, o, au*. — pp. 181-82

Abhinavagupta dwells on the several aspects of *visarga*: its position as the 16th vowel as the transition to the consonants, its meaning as a *śakti*, and the entire erotic symbolism associated with the terms *bīja* and *yoni*.

> The Lord (always coupled with His emanatory Energy) emanates the universe. That energy of emanation (*visarga-śakti*) extends from the earth to *śakti* (from the point of view of *tattva*) or from *ka* to *kṣa* (from the point of view of letter). This is declared as the "sixteenth *kalā*" (also as *amā kalā*) in the following verse: "In the *cinmaya puruṣa*,

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70. Cf. A. Sanderson., "A Commentary on the Opening Verses of the Tantrasāra", in: *Sāmarasya*, p. 98, note 28: "The common sense of the term *visarga* is 'emission,' meaning either 'the action of emitting' or 'that which is emitted.' But in this higher *visargaḥ* no process or object of emission is manifest. I have therefore abandoned the literal meaning of the term and translated it 'the state of absolute potential.'"

> i.e. Śiva who is of 16 *kalās*, the 16th *kalā* is known as *amṛtakalā* (the immortal or "changeless" *kalā*)." This is the standpoint neither of Sāṁkhya nor of Vedānta, but only of Śaiva Śāstra. The *visarga-śakti* of the supreme Lord is the seed of the highest beatitude.
>
> Thus *a* and other letters (i.e. *ā, i, u, ṛ* and *ḷ*) having acquired compactness (*ghanatā*) and assuming the form of *śāktayoni* or consonant do not deviate from their essential nature. All these, by their transmission in consonants (*yonirūpa*) which are however, their own essential nature, are known as having acquired the position of *visarga*, i.e. expansion. — p. 174

The classes of consonants (*varga*) are derived from the vowels, and they are described as their condensation (*ghanatā*, p. 63 Skt.). *Visarga* is then taken in its full erotic implications.

> Thus *Śiva-bīja*, i.e. *svara* (vowel) becoming condensed through its autonomy and abiding in the *śākta-rūpa* in a *śakti* form as *kusuma* (blood) is called *yoni*, i.e. a consonant. (By the combination of *Śiva-bīja* and *śākta-yoni*, there is universal manifestation.)
>
> That red sperm of Śakti or female principle according to the principle referred to before, consisting of three angles, viz., *grāhya* (object), *grahaṇa* (knowledge), *grāhaka* (subject) when mingled with the semen of Śiva or male principle becomes the place of procreation (*visargapada*) or external expansion. It is only by the meeting of both Śiva and Śakti that there is the activity of *puṣpa* or the female creative red sperm, i.e. in the female aspect, it is known as *yoni* or female organ of generation because of its fitness for mating by the Śiva aspect or male. Therefore, that red sperm (*kusumam eva*) itself being three-angled represents the *yoni* or female organ of generation.
> — p. 175

Visarga in the sense of emission or creativity also partakes in the three levels: *para*, *parāpara* and *apara*, depending on the stage of its unfoldment.

> That supreme energy of manifestation (*para śāmbhava visarga*) becomes supreme-cum-non-supreme energy (*parāpara*) which expands because of its excessive plentitude and because of its being inseparably connected with the supreme energy and instantly

> becomes the aspect of *ha,* i.e. *apara visarga* or external manifestation. It is the acquisition of the state of *ha,* i.e. external manifestation that actually brings about the existence of a network of innumerable categories symbolised by *ka,* etc. It is again this very *ha kalā* or external manifestation which entering the *bindu,* i.e. *aṁ* of *ahaṁ* terminates into the *anuttara* state. — p. 182

There is then a movement to and fro between *visarga* and *bindu*. Being the sixteenth (vowel), the *Vivaraṇa* comes back to the symbolism of the *tithi*s or lunar phases, where the elements of Time and Breath come into play.

> In accordance with the principle that there are sixteen *tuṭi*s in one movement of *prāṇa,* the *a* etc., viz. the 16 vowels while inhering within as phonemes divide the *tuṭi*s into half and half and including the cessation in the first half and the rise of *prāṇa* into the second half, represent the fortnight of time (15 *tithi*s) in the external world. These *tithi*s are also said to be *kalā*s or digits of the moon. When the sixteenth digit, which has the *śakti* or power to expand (*visargakalā* or *kalā*) remains apart, i.e. does not expand, it is designated the seventeenth digit in *Śrī Vādya* and other scriptures in the following words:
>
> "That 16th or *visargātmikā kalā* by itself becomes half of *ha,* i.e. *visarga* (:) and further half of *visarga,* i.e. *bindu* (.). Then it is known as the 17th goddess or *kalā*." Because of *visarga* being half of *ha* and further half of this being *bindu,* which is *viśleṣa,* i.e. apart, not taking part in expansion is known as the 17th *kalā*. — p. 187

The complexity of the symbolism of *visarga* is again overarched by its spiritual significance in connection with the *kuṇḍalinī,* as Abhinavagupta develops it in the *Tantrāloka* (III.137-46), where he describes the three types or stages of *kuṇḍalinī*: *śakti-kuṇḍalinī, prāṇa-kuṇḍalinī* and *parā-kuṇḍalinī* (III.139-40), and he concludes: "The movement of creation and absorption of the Lord is nothing but *visarga* (emission, potential)" (III.141ab: *visargamātraṁ nāthasya sr̥ṣṭi saṁhāra vibhramāḥ*).

Creativity or potential as *visarga* is hence related to all its dimensions: cosmic, linguistic, sexual, and spiritual, and all symbolised by two dots.

The Goddess Alphabet: Mātṛkā and Mālinī

The Tantra gives the emanation of the phonemes in the order of Mātṛkā but there is no reference to *mālinī*, the "mixed" alphabet. Abhinavagupta introduces *mālinī* on the basis of the *Mālinīvijayottara* which he quotes from extensively. It is important to understand the relationship between the three terms containing the totality of sounds or letters. The *Tantrāloka* provides brief and clear definitions:

> Thus the Supreme Lord, full with the Power of the fifty acts of consciousness (the fifty phonemes) is only One Reflective Awareness (*vimarśa*), all the other (phonematic) energies are established there itself. — III.196cd-197ab
>
> When (the phonic emanation) is made up of one single act of consciousness, this is Bhairava, the Mass of Sounds (*Śabdarāśi*). When this (mass of sounds) is touched by the shadow of the object of the act of consciousness, this (results in the arising of the phonemes in) the energy, the *mātṛkā*. — III.198, verse tr. A. Padoux, *Vāc*, p. 312

The verses quoted above define first the difference between *śabdarāśi* as the unity of all sounds in Śiva, and *mātṛkā*, the Śakti aspect in the form of the alphabet in its usual grammatical sequence. And then he comes to the third aspect of the totality of phonemes, *mālinī*. Jayaratha introduces the verse thus:

> Thus the power of Emission (*visarga-śakti*) only manifests the universal forms in her own self by the respective acts of (phonematic) awareness, and in the Āgamas they are described by these terms:
>
> It is called Totality of Sound (*śabdarāśi*), and she (Śakti) is known as *mātṛkā*. By the penetration of that which is to be incited (i.e. the consonants) and the inciter (i.e. the vowels as Śiva), she is called *mālinī*.[71] *Mālinī*, who is beautiful by the arising of the emission brought about by the combination of seed (vowels) and womb (consonants), is the Supreme Energy, described as containing the form of the universe (*viśvarūpiṇī*). — *Tantrāloka* III.232-33

Mālinī is then introduced in the *Vivaraṇa* in this way:

> In these very letters of *mālinī*, the structure of the *śākta-śarīra* has

71. Jayaratha quotes in confirmation the *Parātrīśikā*, verse 9, *mātṛkā* being the source of all *mantras*.

been described (in *Mālinīvijaya*) for the purpose of *nyāsa* (mental assignment of the various parts of the body to tutelary deities by placing one's fingers on them). Thus the principle that "everything else is in everything" has been completely demonstrated. It is the venerable supreme verbum (*parā vāk*) which, according to the principle enunciated, casting its reflection in *paśyantī*, simultaneously attains in *madhyamā* established as identical with itself a form of letters in which consonants are intermingled with vowels in an irregular order, and thus becomes *mālinī* itself which is characterised by difference in the reckoning of the various vowels (*kula-puruṣa*) and the various consonants (i.e. *kula-śakti* indicated by the word *ādi*) in innumerable ways owing to the endless diversity of intermixture of consonants (*yoni*) and vowels (*bīja*). As has been said:

One should worship *mālinī* whose corpus is constituted by a group of many vowels (*kuladeha*) and consonants (*kula-śakti*).

By adopting this practice, the *yogī* who is engrossed in the practice of repeated meditation acquires supernormal power in respect of various *bhuvanas*, *tattvas*, centres of energy in the body (*śārīreṣu cakreṣu*) everywhere in respect of body and *prāṇa*. — pp. 149 f.

This passage already contains some of the essential elements constituting *mālinī*, "the garlanded Goddess" (with the fifty phonemes in mixed order): She makes up the body of energy brought about by *nyāsa* or imposition of syllables on the body of the practitioner in order to transform it into a divine body. At the same time, her own body consists of the phonemes. In a *stotra* fragment Abhinavagupta calls the Goddess (Ambikā): *sakalaśabdamayī kila te tanuḥ*, "Your body consists of all the sounds/words,"[72] and hence, all the words uttered are nothing but a praise to Her.

S. Vasudeva has devoted an article to the *Mālinī*[73] where he introduces the theme thus:

The Goddess Mālinī is one of two alphabet deities prominent in the Tāntric system called the Trika. The mantric identity of this Goddess is the *nādiphāntakrama* (lit. "the order [of the alphabet] beginning with *na* and ending with *pha*"), a particular rearrangement of the Sanskrit syllabary in which vowels and consonants are intermingled in a

72. Quoted in *Gītārthasaṁgraha*, p. 221.

73. "Synaesthetic Iconography: 1. the *Nādiphāntakrama*", in: *Mélanges tantriques . . .*, pp. 517-50.

> hitherto unexplained and at first sight random order. In all early sources surviving each individual phoneme of the sequence is said to be a body-part of the Goddess Mālinī, and some accounts also supply the names and details of fifty presiding female phoneme-deities. To explain the underlying rationale of the *nādiphāntakrama* the two presumed original functions of the sequence are here investigated: the ritual projection of the alphabet into the practitioner's body (*nyāsa*) and the encryption and "extraction" (decoding) of mantras (*mantroddhāra*). — pp. 517-18

The other important aspect of *mālinī* hinted at in the *Vivaraṇa* passage concerns her direct descent from *parā* via *paśyantī* to *madhyamā*. Her locus in the scheme of *vāk* is therefore *madhyamā*, she does not descend to the level of *vaikharī*. This means the predominance of the psychological-spiritual dimension based on the "covering up of objectivity by pure subjectivity . . . and the mutual inherence of that which expresses (*vācaka*) and that which has to be expressed (*vācya*)."[74] Her stage is one that precedes language itself.[75] She therefore belongs to the level of *parāparā*, mediating between the transcendent and the immanent.

> The goddess *parā vak* who assumes different states (i.e. the state of *paśyantī*, *madhyamā*, etc.) becomes in her chief mode, i.e. *madhyamā* (i.e. *parāparā* state) goddess Mālinī herself. At this stage, She becomes so infinite, that considering the varied forms which She assumes she appears omnifarious, and thus being of all forms, she assumes the state of letter (*varṇa*), word (*mantra*) and sentence (*pada*) through the predominance of three aspects, viz. *para* (supreme), *parāpara* (i.e. subtle or *sūkṣma*) and *apara* (gross or *sthūla*), i.e. even in *parāpara* state. — p. 154

The third and controversial aspect mentioned in the above passage is the nature of *mālinī* as *bhinnayoni*,[76] which means a mixing of vowels and consonants in an unusual order.[77] The justification for this mixing is, interestingly, the universal nature, the interconnectedness or omnipresence of everything (i.e. phonemes and

74. A Padoux, *Vāc*, p. 327. Cf. *PTV*, p. 121 (Skt. p. 50).

75. p. 121.

76. Cf. Skt. p. 41.

77. The term *akrama* need not mean "orderless," as translated by Jaideva Singh, but "not of the usual order." Cf. the criticism of S. Vasudeva, art. cit., p. 518.

tattvas): *viśvātmakatvam* or *sarvātmakatvam*. This explains the interpenetration of *vācya* (consonants) and *vācaka* (vowels).[78] A more dynamic way of expressing this mutual connection is *lolībhāva* (cf. p. 121), the oscillation between two poles.[79] This swinging or fusion concerns Śiva and Śakti, vowels and consonants, signifier and signified. As L. Silburn and A. Padoux remark, this is a precursor of language in its mixed or combined form.[80]

S. Vasudeva has rightly pointed out that the "non-order" or mixed order which has been transmitted in a number of early Trika texts does not constitute an arbitrary or confused sequence of phonemes, but that there is a surprising uniformity in the texts with very little variations. Thus the rationale behind the *bhinnayoni* order is the ritual *nyāsa* and the construction of the Divine body of the Goddess Mālinī herself. The body of the worshipper and of the worshipped are made of the same power of the letters in a particular ritual procedure.[81]

If the order of *mātr̥kā* is transgressed in *mālinī*, this does not effect the order of *tattvas*, whether in descending (*sr̥ṣṭikrama*) or in ascending (*saṁhārakrama*).

The *mātr̥kā* order is also preserved in the sense that the first 16 phonemes are assigned to the *Śiva-tattva*, as are the 16 vowels of *mātr̥kā*, although they are not only vowels but mixed. In this way the rationale of the system is preserved.

However, the iconographic and calligraphic aspects of *mālinī* described in the early Trika texts (and the attempt at a reconstruction by S. Vasudeva) are absent in the *Vivaraṇa*. As we have already seen, Abhinavagupta differs from Somānanda

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78. *viśvātmakatvaṁ ca parasparasvarūpavyāmiśratayā syāt, bījātmanāṁ svarāṇāṁ vācakatvaṁ yonirūpāṇāṁ ca vyañjananāṁ vācyatvam — krameṇa śivaśaktyātmakatvāt* I — p. 50

79. Cf. S. Vasudeva, art. cit., "The Sanskrit technical term used to express such "fusion" is *lolībhāva*. More precisely this seems to have originally denoted a state of indistinctness or instability that various entities must assume when they are on the verge of merging together, to the extent that they can no longer be distinguished. In the Kashmirian exegetical tradition *lolībhāva* is usually interpreted as a synonym for other technical terms denoting such fusion: *laya, saṁghaṭṭa, yāmala* and *sāmarasya*, but evidently these terms all have complex histories of their own," pp. 534-35.

80. Cf. Abhinavagupta, La lumière sur les Tantras (comm. on III.198-200): "Mais l'important est, par le mélange des phonèmes, la *mālinī* prefigure en quelque sorte le langage," p. 186.

81. For details I refer to S. Vasudeva, art. cit., for example the description of the *MVT* 3.37-416, tr. pp. 524-25.

Mālinī Alphabet with *tattvas*

S. No.	*Varṇa or arṇa*	*Tattva*
1.	*gha*	*Sadāśiva*
2.	*ṅa*	*Īśvara*
3.	*i*	*Śuddha-vidyā*
4.	*a*	*Māyā*
5.	*va*	*Niyati*
6.	*bha*	*Kāla*
7.	*ya*	*Rāga*
8.	*da*	*Vidyā*
9.	*ḍha*	*Kalā*
10.	*ṭha*	*Puruṣa*
11.	*jha*	*Prakṛti*
12.	*ña*	*Buddhi*
13.	*ja*	*Ahaṁkāra*
14.	*ra*	*Manas*
15.	*ṭa*	*Śrotra*
16.	*pa*	*Tvak*
17.	*cha*	*Cakṣu*
18.	*la*	*Rasanā*
19.	*ā*	*Ghrāṇa*
20.	*sa*	*Vāk*
21.	*aḥ*	*Pāṇi*
22.	*ha*	*Pāda*
23.	*ṣa*	*Upastha*
24.	*kṣa*	*Pāyu*
25.	*ma*	*Śabda*
26.	*śa*	*Sparśa*

27.	*aṁ*	*Rūpa*
28.	*ta*	*Rasa*
29.	*e*	*Gandha*
30.	*ai*	*Ākāśa*
31.	*o*	*Vāyu*
32.	*au*	*Tejas*
33.	*da*	*Jala*
34.	*pha*	*Pṛthivī*

with regard to *lipi*, since he considers scripts a more regionally limited mode of expressing the Word than sound. We also do not find in the *Vivaraṇa* the names of Śaktis associated with the letters, only the mention of *kulapuruṣa* for the power of vowels, and *kula-śakti* for consonants. What remains is the importance of ritual purification and divinisation of the body.[82] That is why Abhinavagupta relates the entire theme to the ritual and spiritual purification: *śodhana, śodhya, śodhaka* (cf. pp. 156-59).

Abhinavagupta defends a variety of scriptural assembling and mixing of letters, and he compares it to the mixture of certain ingredients in a medicine, which brings about healing in the body, whereas the various *mantras* taught in the Tantras bring about spiritual power and *siddhis* (p. 149). There is a clear parallelism between physical and spiritual healing implied.

Generally comparing the three systems of phonematic manifestation or alphabets, the *śabdarāśi*, identified with Śiva, the *mālinī* and *mātṛkā*, identified with Śakti, the most powerful is the *mālinī*, which has arisen from a friction of *śabdarāśi* and *mātṛkā*.[83] It is *mālinī* with the mutual pervasion of the vowels and

82. Cf. S. Vasudeva, art. cit., p. 528: "Just as the *śabdarāśi* sequence has a series of Rudras presiding over the individual phonemes. So the *Nādiphānta* sequence has a pantheon of female deities, variously called Śakti, Kalā, Dūtī or Yoginī, presiding over the individual syllables. Their original purpose was the ritual purification, empowerment and divinisation of the physical body during the imposition of the phonemes in the practice of *nyāsa*." See his list of *varṇas* and their *śaktis*, pp. 529-30.

83. Cf. *TĀ* III.199.

consonants and the *tattvas*, which is most apt to demonstrate the pervasiveness of All-in-all (*sarvaṁ sarvātmakam*).

This did not remain an esoteric secret, but in hymnology *Mālinī* is invoked in several of her aspects mentioned above. Thus the *Bahurūpagarbhastotra* of the *Svacchanda Tantra* has the following verse:

> *naphakoṭisamāveśabharitākhila sr̥ṣṭaye* ।
> *namaḥ śaktiśarīrāya koṭidvitayasaṅgine* ॥ — v. 26

> Praise be to you, who fill the entire creation by entering within (the phonemes) from *na* to *pha* (i.e. *mālinī*), who embody Energy, and who is closely associated with these two extremes (i.e. the first and last letters).[84]

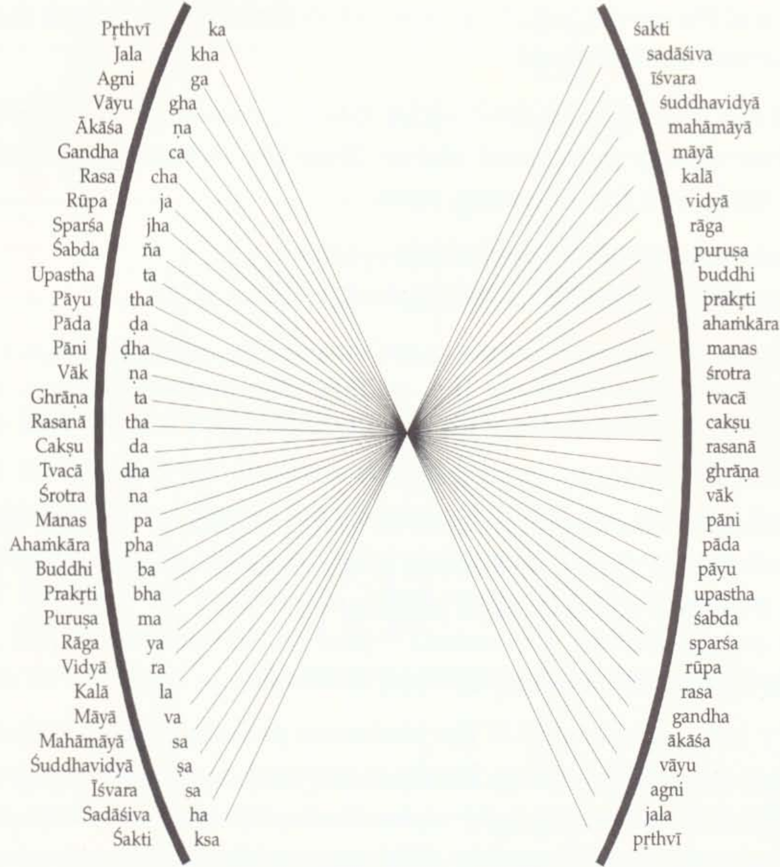
We have already encountered elements of *mātr̥kā*. Again, if *śabdarāśi* corresponds to the supreme level (*parā*), and *mālinī* is a reflection of *paśyantī* in *madhyamā*, *mātr̥kā* is a reflection of *śabdarāśi* in *paśyantī*.

The Specular Nature of Reality: *Bimba-Pratibimba*

What exactly is the relationship of the phonemes as basic constituents of language and the cosmotheandric reality levels or *tattvas*? and what is the place of a hierarchically ordered multiplicity in a non-dualist system? These underlying questions are constantly addressed by Abhinavagupta in varying ways and contexts. The two fundamental hermeneutic insights he uses as keys are (1) the interconnectedness of all things, *sarvaṁ sarvātmakam*, and (2) the "theory"[85] of reflection, *bimba-pratibimba*. Both serve as unifying hermeneutic tools and overarching systems of understanding reality. A. Padoux calls it "Abhinavagupta's emanationist non-dualism," "occurring through projection of light and reflection (*pratibimba*)" (*Vāc*, p. 231). On the background of the non-dual unity of the Godhead, it is "the theory of the *ābhāsa* and of the reflection (*pratibimba*), which

84. Cf. text and translation in: "Bahurūpagarbhastotra, An Annotated Translation" by H.N. Chakravarty, in: *Sāmarasya*, p. 44.

85. I understand "theory" here in the ancient Greek sense of *theoria* which is not the opposite of *praxis*, but which has a contemplative implication, not dissimilar to *vimarśa*, which also means reflective awareness and meditation.



The Reflection of the Tattvas and Phonemes: Bimba-Pratibimba

demands that the paradigm of all differentiation should abide within the primal state of undifferentiation" (ibid., p. 234).

In the scheme of the *upāya*s or spiritual stages/ways, *bimba-pratibimba* is not by chance realised at the level of *śāmbhava*, the Divine way. Only the *yogī* whose awareness is already merged with Śiva (Śambhu) can perceive the world as a reflection (*pratibimba*) of the Divine (*bimba*).[86]

86. Cf. *TS* III, p. 10: *ayaṁ ca asya upadeśaḥ-sarvaṁ idaṁ bhāvajātaṁ bodhagagane pratibimbamātraṁ pratibimbalakṣaṇopetatvāt* . . . "This is the instruction: All this, the created reality, is nothing but a reflection in the sky of consciousness, because it has the characteristic of a reflection. . . ." Swami Lakshman Joo, coming from the living tradition, gives the spiritual implications of the *bimba-pratibimba* practice: "The theory of reflection

→

The metaphor or analogy of reflection has been fully developed by Abhinavagupta on the basis of Utpaladeva's initial theory.[87] The metaphorical *nyāya* of comparing the relationship of the universe with Śiva or ultimate Consciousness is that of "city in a mirror" (*darpaṇanagara*).[88] Philosophically he goes into the question of avoiding any sense of duality between *bimba* and *pratibimba*, the city and the mirror. True to the *svātantryavāda* he answers the difficult question, what is the cause of the reflection, by referring to the absolute independence of the Divine.[89] In the words of Swami Lakshman Joo:

> The universe is reflected in the mirror of consciousness, not in the

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(*pratibimbavāda*) is meant for advanced *yogins*. This theory teaches them how to be aware in their daily activities, while talking, while walking, while tasting, while touching, while hearing, while smelling. While they are doing all these various actions they see that all of these actions move in their Supreme Consciousness. Their vision, their perception, heretofore limited becomes unlimited. The mode of their actions becomes absolutely unique. They see each and every action in their God Consciousness. They exist in the state of *sadāśiva*. Each and every act of their life becomes glorious. This is the awareness that comes from the practice of *pratibimba*." (Kashmir Shaivism, p. 32).

87. Cf. *ĪPK* and *Vṛtti* II.4.19.

88. Cf. N. Rastogi, "Some more *Nyāyas* as Employed by Abhinavagupta", in: *Annals of BORI*, LXV (1984), pp. 27-42, esp. 28-29.

89. Cf. for a brief discussion, *Tantrasāra* III, p. 11. Cf. D.P. Lawrence, "Remarks on Abhinavagupta's use of the Analogy of Reflection", in: *Journal of Indian Philosophy* (2005) 33: 583-99, p. 591. "This leads to a question regarding which Abhinavagupta does give inconsistent answers in his texts — whether or not there is a prototype object (*bimba*) for the reflection (*pratibimba*) that is the universe. Sometimes Abhinava indicates that there is a *bimba* and sometimes that there is not. His basic point is that there is no *bimba* if that is conceived as something external to consciousness. However, he always makes it clear that there is a cause (*hetu*) for the *pratibimba*, that is, an efficient cause (*nimitta*) rather than a material cause (*upādāna*). That cause is none other than Śakti, variously identified as the Kaulikī Śakti, Supreme Speech (*parāvāk*), semantic intuition (*pratibhā*), the Unsurpassed (*anuttara*), agential self-determination (*svātantrya*) and the various modes of self-recognition (*vimarśa*, *parāmarśa*, and so on)." I disagree with Lawrence, e.g. when he places the Pratyabhijñā at the level of *śāktopāya* (p. 594), it is at the border between *śāmbhava* and *anupāya*. Besides, the designation of "monistic Śaivism" (used of course by other authors) is highly misleading, because monism would strictly speaking exclude multiplicity and the reality of worldly objects. But this will be discussed in the concluding chapter.

organs nor in the five gross elements. These are merely *tattvas* and cannot reflect anything. The real reflector is consciousness. In consciousness, however, you see only the reflected thing and not anything that is reflected. That which is reflected (*bimba*) is in fact *svātantrya*. This whole universe is the reflection in God Consciousness or *svātantrya*. There is no additional class of similar objects existing outside of this world that He reflects in His nature. The outside element, that which is reflected, is only *svātantrya*. The infinite variety which is created is only the expansion of *svātantrya*.

— *Kashmir Shaivism*, pp. 29-30

In the summary verse to the chapter on *śāmbhavopāya* of the *Tantrasāra* Abhinavagupta says it in poetic language:

antarvibhāti sakalaṁ jagadātmanīha
yadvadvicitraracanā mukurāntarāle ।
bodhaḥ paraṁ nijavimarśarasanānuvr̥ttyā
viśvaṁ parāmr̥śati no mukurastathā tu ॥[90]

The whole world shines within the self
just as manifold creations are reflected in a mirror.
The Supreme Consciousness, in harmony
with the blissful taste of its own reflective awareness
recognises the universe perfectly, but not the mirror.

In the *Vivaraṇa* Abhinavagupta develops this theme precisely in the context of the phonemes and *tattvas*. Here the metaphor serves again to uphold the unity of Consciousness *vis-à-vis* the multiplicity of language and reality levels, and it plays with the idea of reversal, where left becomes right and right left, or up and down are interchanged.

This reflectivity goes beyond a mere system of correspondences, which we find from the Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads onwards. However, the highest correspondence in Śaiva non-dualism is that of *prakāśa* and *vimarśa*. At the supreme level even the duality of *bimba* and *pratibimba* is transcended:

atra tu parasaṁvidi yathaiva bhāsaḥ tathaiva vyavahāramayo 'pi vimarśaḥ, tena

90. *TS*, p. 19.

> — *jala iva jalaṁ jvālāyāmiva jvālā sarvathā abhedamayā eva bhāvā bhāsante, na tu pratibimba kalpenāpi kevalam* । — p. 45
>
> In the supreme consciousness, however, as is the light, so is the reflection, even in the outer activity.[91] Therefore, all things appear as non-different (from consciousness), just as water is in water, or flame in flame, not just like a reflected image. — cf. p. 111[92]

The reflection occurs from *parā* down to *parāparā*, hence to *paśyantī* and *madhyamā*. But the reversal happens in the case of the *tattva*s and not the phonemes, which are divinely arranged.

I may cite the summary by A. Padoux before giving examples of the reflection and interpenetration of phonemes and *tattva*s. In fact, the two systems of hermeneutics are closely related: the *sarvasarvātmakatva* and the philosophy of *bimba-pratibimba*, because it is by the principle of the presence of everything in everything that reflection is possible; and vice versa, things and states are interconnected because there is a Divine reflection in the whole of Reality.

> It is, of course, Śiva, the Word at its highest level, who is here at work. It is the Word that casts the reflection (*pratibimbam arpayet*) of the *tattva*s of the manifestation in *parāvāc* into the next stage, that of the supreme-non-supreme energy where differentiation, utterly absent at the level of Śiva, gradually arises. But since there exists no other energy than that of the Word, the energy acts as a — not at all passive — mirror "made of the Word." This mirror, or more accurately, this supreme-non-supreme energy, says Abhinavagupta, is constituted by the garland of phonemes from *ka* to *kṣa* (*kādikṣāntavarṇamālāśarīra*). Thus only the *tattva*s are reflected, and not the phonemes, since these form the phonematic energy upon which the consonants are reflected. — *Vāc*, p. 315

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91. The conciseness of this sentence could remind one of "as in heaven so on earth" of the Christian tradition (cf. the "Our Father"). It also reminds us of the identity of *saṁsāra* and *nirvāṇa* in Mahāyāna Buddhism (Nāgārjuna).

92. Cf. *Vijñāna Bhairava* v. 110: "Just as waves arise from water, flames from fire and rays from the sun, in the same way the differentiated aspects of the universe have sprung form me, (that is) Bhairava."

→

We may consider the example of the descending reflection from Śiva down to Earth.[93]

> So this alone is possible and appears appropriate also that the light of Bhairava, at the very first stage of external manifestation, having its objective the earth category, through *vimarśa-śakti* continues to move towards earth only in its march of descent.
>
> Thus that very last *tattva*, viz. *pṛthivī* (earth), while maintaining its character as earth (*sa hi caramo bhāgaḥ tathātāvat svātmarūpaṁ bibhrat*) and holding within itself all the innumerable earlier *tattvas* (e.g., water — *jala*, fire — *agni*, etc.) as inseparable from itself, appearing in that form (*bhāsamāno*) and viewed in that aspect (*vimṛśyamānaḥ*) is complete in itself. Its precedent *tattva* also (i.e. *jala* or water) having the posterior *tattva* (i.e. *pṛthivī* or earth) as its background, being identical with the appearance and perceptibility present in the earth category (*vṛtta-pūrvaparipūrṇābhāsāsāravimarśa-tādātmyāt*) and not renouncing the completeness of its posterior *tattva* (i.e. the *pṛthivī tattva*) inevitably brings within its compass the fullness of all the preceding *tattvas* also (*svayaṁ ca svarūpanāntarīya katāhaṭhakṛṣṭapūrva-pūrvatarādi bhāgantarā-bhogo*) and appearing and being carefully considered in that way is integral in the same way (as the *pṛthivītattva*). Thus one by one, all the preceding *tattvas* (*agni* — fire, etc.) not being separated from their posterior two or three ones, including within themselves the delightful existence of their antecedent *tattvas* in accordance with the non-divergence from the nature of Bhairava which has accrued to them, are perfectly integral. — pp. 112-13

Abhinavagupta makes it clear that this is a process of meditation by which all levels of reality are integrated in the divine Bhairava-nature. Therefore he adds a practical *dhāraṇā* for entering into the state of Bhairava, quoting the *Vijñāna Bhairava*. It is a method of perceiving the totality in all fragments.

> You, who are proficient in thinking of Bhairava, become engrossed in meditating on Him. An undivided sight from a distance of a wilderness without limitation of associated objects like pond, mountain, tree, etc. or even with these limitations (*tadvatyapi*) providing a wholeness of vision offers a well-known means of entree

93. I use the capital for the *tattva*, to distinguish it from the physical entity (earth).

> into Bhairava-consciousness. As *Vijñāna Bhairava* puts it: "One should cast one's gaze on a region in which there are no trees, or mountain, or even wall. His mental state being without any support will then dissolve and the fluctuations of his mind will cease" (verse 60). Otherwise if there is partial perception, then if the perception beginning with the first part of the same is only of parts (i.e. is not an integral perception), then what is the difference of Bhairava-consciousness from the other lower states of consciousness which are full of difference and are avowedly fragmentary? The difference lies in the fact that Bhairava-consciousness expressing as it does the delight of the unity of endless variety of existence is considered to be integral as compared with other states of consciousness which are fragmentary. Those who have received proper training and have penetrated into the divine consciousness know this difference themselves. — pp. 113-14

As a spiritual master Abhinavagupta knows the limitations of verbal instructions, even of the highest kind, if the disciple/reader is not open to the Divine grace:

> If the heart-lotus of some animal-like men has not blown under the ray of grace falling from the highest Lord, then hundreds of words of mine, even though their hearts be pierced with sharp needle-like words can neither make the heart-lotus bloom nor make it accomplish (the objective).
>
> On a (thing like) jar also, one similarly casts an integral look. In this case also, the indeterminate consciousness instantly (*jhagiti*) takes in a view of the jar as a whole (not of its constituent parts), and then forms all kinds of determinate ideas about it and they starting from the barest ultimate part enter into the interior and the interior-most aspect and finally dissolve again in the indeterminate state. Therefore, there is no use in referring to other similar cases. Similarly in this matter also, the Śiva principle is inherent in all cases (i.e. even in the earth category) as an indeterminate reality, and having the elegant autonomy of generating determinate states is, though itself beginningless, decidedly the prius of all reality. There is no difference of opinion in this matter. This Śiva principle can be considered complete only if it abides also in the ultimate earth category. So also, the consciousness of earth (*dharā-saṁvit*) can display it as identical with central Reality in spite of its appearance as an

> object only when it is able to display the awareness of all categories as inherent in the earth category. — p. 114

Perceiving the whole of objective reality in this way means to overcome the fragmented perception and seeing things in the light of the Divine:

> Finally, the Earth itself is but the integral divine consciousness, i.e. the very Self of Śiva. Thus even a fraction of space contains the entire form of *Brahman* (p. 116) (*pradeśamātram api brahmaṇaḥ sarvarūpaṁ*, p. 47).

Kṣemarāja quotes the last phrase[94] in his commentary on the *Svacchanda Tantra* (IV.102), in the context of *dīkṣā*, where the initiated has to pass through the *tattvas* and the corresponding phonemes. He introduces the statements thus:

> *tathāpi ādikṣāntasya śabdarāśer-aśeṣa viśvaśarīra parabhairava-parāmarśātmakatvena ekaiko 'pyaṁśaḥ* — p. 59

> Even then every single part of the totality of sounds, beginning with *a* and ending in *kṣa*, (is complete) because of the synthetic awareness of the entire universe as the body of the Supreme Bhairava.

The basis of this statement is again the theory of the "omnipresence of all in all,"[95] *viśvātmakatvāt* (p. 59, l. 10), the interconnectedness of all things, and the presence of the totality in a single part:

> *ekaikatra ca tattve ṣaṭtriṁśatattvarūpatā* — ibid.

> In every single (cosmotheandric) reality the nature of all the thirty six *tattvas* is present.

The context of *dīkṣā* is significant for the practical implications of the development in the *Vivaraṇa*.

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94. In the variant form: *pradeśo 'pi brahmaṇah sārvarūpyam-anatikrāntaścāvikalpyam*, *SvT*, vol. II, p. 59.

95. A. Padoux's translation.

Concluding Verses

In his both systematic and poetic way, Abhinavagupta concludes this section of commenting verses 5-9 by 31 verses giving the meaning in brief (*saṁkṣepārthaḥ*, p. 72). They are extremely helpful for not losing the thrust of the complex subject matter. First he states the overall conception of the metaphysical reality underlying all manifestations.

> The one who is characterised by the wonder
> of union with the blissful essence of pure freedom
> is the Goddess Parā (the Supreme)
> who ever shines as Bhairavī Herself. 1
>
> The one (Śiva) who is in union with Her nature,[96]
> he is unimpeded and ever present,
> being of the nature of consciousness
> full of self-reflection, he shines in manifestations
> (reaching) from Sadāśiva down to the Earth,
> (in all things such as) blue, yellow, happiness (and sorrow). 2-3
>
> That is called means of knowledge
> which perceives everything in its own nature,
> and which shines equally in children, animals and in the wise.[97] 4...
>
> Thus the Light (of Consciousness) is by its nature of the essence of self-reflection
> and that which is awareness of the true nature (*svarūpāmarśanam*)
> is itself the body of the Supreme Word (*paravāgvapuḥ*). 8
>
> It is its very nature to appear in diverse forms of existence.
> Therefore, it shines as the cosmos of variegated beings.
> It never undergoes a state of dependence on others. 9[98]
>
> . . .

---

96. R. Gnoli's edition reads *bhāsa* instead of *bhāva*.

97. Lit. "all-knowing," *sarvavidām*.

98. Free verse my own translation.

> As it is not dependent on anything (outside itself), how can any impediment possibly exist in it? Therefore, self-consciousness which is void of convention transcends all space, time, *kalā*, *māyā*, limitation of place or activity. It is perfect in itself, it is the all yet different from all forms and figures. It is the natural, supreme consciousness characterised by excellent refinement, of the pure form of *śuddhavidyā*, it is the *aham* or I in both ways, i.e. both as Śiva and Śakti, both as consciousness and its expression as Energy. That *aham* (I) itself as *mātṛkā*, is the very essential nature of earth, etc. In the highest sense, its fluid form is said to be the vowel (*bīja*) and the solid form the consonant (*yoni*), the very nature of Śiva and Śakti. — p. 194

> By the union of Śiva and Śakti arises the universal bliss. 15ab

> The virile energy (of *anuttara* or I-consciousness) which is the highest reality (*pāramārthika-sadvapuḥ*) and which is present in the universe inherent within up to its extreme limit is designated as *visarga* both in its aspect of *viśleṣa*, i.e. external expansion or *prasāra* and its aspect as *yojanā*, i.e. inward withdrawal or *saṁhāra*. This *visarga* is the invariable domain (of the aspirants), this is the easy means of attaining to *anuttara*. — p. 195

. . .

Abhinavagupta then summarises *mātṛkā* and *mālinī* and comes to *mantravīrya*, the potency of *mantra* which is *aham*, "I." The aim of the entire enterprise is nothing but liberation-in-life:

> When the awakened one realises it as his supreme nature,
> he is at once liberated-in-life.
> But the *yogī*s who desire supernormal powers
> meditate on *aham* in a limited way,
> (concentrating) on the navel, the space of the heart (and other centres).

Abhinavagupta then ends with his personal statement in due humility, leaving this realisation to the disciples/readers: The goal of this knowledge is not limited to the *yogī* but he has to share it with others by liberating them:

> I have explained this to a certain extent (*manāk*)
> according to (the teaching) of the *guru* and Āgama.
> As to what happens by resorting to this I-consciousness,

ask your personal experience.
I have only shown a little bit of the path.

Who can say with certainty "this much is all" regarding the divine consciousness? The divine grace has been vouchsafed to me only to this extent. By that (grace), I have been privileged to disclose this much (as means) (viz. *khecarī sāmya* or identity with the divine consciousness). Subtler *tarka* than this (i.e. *sat-tarka*) may occur to other experients either today (in the present) or at some other time (past or future), i.e. the *tarka* either may occur in the present (*bhavati*), or occurred in the past (*abhūt*), or will occur in the future (*bhavitā*). Among all the lights of the component parts of *yoga*, this (i.e. *tarka*) has been determined in Śrī Pūrva Śāstra (i.e. *Mālinīvijaya*) as the brilliant sun (*gabhastimān*) by which one gets liberated and liberates others. This (i.e. *tarka*) should be clearly understood in every way and reflected on by the clear-sighted ones (*vicakṣaṇaiḥ*) desirous of the supreme state (*parepsubhiḥ*) by abandoning for a moment jealousy common to mortal beings. The aspirant is established in the essential nature of the Self immediately after *sat-tarka* (*ālocana*) and, therefore, the specks of cloud that cover the sun of consciousness are dissolved automatically by the savour of delight that the aspirant experiences at this moment. — p. 196

9

The Core Mantra
Hṛdayabīja — The Seed of the Heart

THE section on phonematic manifestation is the basis for the revelation of the core *mantra* of the entire text. The last verse of the preceding group indicated that "the emission from *a* to *kṣa* (i.e. the entire alphabet) is the basis of all *mantra*s and *vidyā*s" (v.8). It has been sufficiently shown that the totality of creation emanates from and is contained in *Anuttara,* just as the phonemes emerge from *a*. In the introductory section (*avatārika*) to the next group of verses (9-18) Abhinavagupta comes back to the phrase *uttarasyāpi anuttaram* (v.3), "the Unsurpassable of even the surpassed" (to venture another translation).

> It has been determined that even the subsequent one, i.e. expansion of the universe has the *anuttara* or the transcendental as its precedent. Now it is the nature of the transcendental which requires a detailed consideration. . . . (*idānīṁ tu anuttaram eva svarūpeṇa vistarato nirṇītaḥ*).
>
> — p. 75

> Though in this system, *anuttara* or the transcendental is nothing different from the *uttara* or the posterior — for if it were something other, that would also fall within the category of the *uttara*, even then there is this difference brought about by the autonomy of the Lord from the point of view of the disciple and the teacher.
>
> — pp. 201-2

Now, the *svarūpa* of *Anuttara* is precisely the core *mantra,* which is the Heart, Bhairava. The entire theory of language, phonemes and *tattva*s has been adduced to arrive at this point where *Anuttara* is not described any more (philosophically or "etymologically" as in the 16 interpretations at the beginning), but its "own-

form" or phonic symbol is revealed as the core *mantra* or "seed of the heart": *hṛdayabīja*[1] (v.25).

A frequently quoted text from the *Sarvācāra* (*Tantra*) says: *mantrā varṇātmakāḥ sarve varṇāḥ sarve śivātmakāḥ* (quoted p. 83, tr. p. 222), "All *mantras* consist of phonemes, and all phonemes are of the nature of Śiva."

The *mantroddhāra* or "extraction of the *mantra*" is of course given in a code language. We have already learnt this code language in the previous section. Let us first consider the revelation of the core *mantra*:

> *caturdaśayutaṁ bhadre*
> *tithīśāntasamanvitam* ॥ 9 ॥
>
> *tṛtīyaṁ brahma suśroṇi*
> *hṛdayaṁ bhairavātmanaḥ* ।
> *etannāyoginījāto*
> *nārudro labhate sphuṭam* ॥ 10 ॥
>
> *hṛdayaṁ devadevasya*
> *sadyo yogavimuktidam* ।
> *asyoccāre kṛte saṁyaṅ*
> *mantramudrāgaṇo mahān* ॥ 11 ॥

A literal translation without decoding the *mantra* reads:

> O Gracious One! it is the third *Brahma*, joined with the fourteenth and combined with the end of the lord of *tithis*, O one with beautiful thighs! This is the Heart of the essence of Bhairava. — 9cd-10ab
>
> This cannot clearly be obtained unless one is born from a *yoginī* or one is a *Rudra*. — 10cd
>
> It is the (very) Heart of the God of gods, which bestows immediately union and liberation. — 11ab

The remaining verses of this group (11cd-18ab) give the fruit or result of the meditation on or "recitation" (*uccāra*) of this seed *mantra*, which Abhinavagupta takes time to decode.

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1. I understand the compound as *karmadhāraya: hṛdayam eva bījam*, "the seed that is the Heart," not as *ṣaṣṭhī tatpuruṣa*: *hṛdayasya bīja*.

Our author first addresses the phrase *hṛdayaṁ bhairavātmanaḥ*, "the Heart of the nature of Bhairava" in the following way:

> The essential being of the universe which is of the nature of Bhairava (of Divine nature), as it has been shown by reasoning and by the Āgama, is determined to be the venerable (Goddess) *parāparā*, and (hence) made of Energy.[2] Its heart, (which means the essence of all) is of the nature of Śiva who is completely embraced by the supreme Goddess, the Venerable Parā.
>
> — p. 77 Skt. with Gnoli's emendation

Abhinavagupta thus opens his commentary by focusing on the Heart and the unity of Śiva and Śakti within that Heart which is the essence of all of Reality. He thereby implicitly hints at the mystico-erotic connotations of the Heart as well as of the *mantra*, and its universal nature. Since the Energy pervades the universe (*śāktaḥ svabhāvaḥ*), it is She who percolates down from the Divine to the human and sub-human levels, where, at every level, the erotic plays a role. Therefore he gives importance to the appellation of the Devī as *suśroṇi*, "one with beautiful thighs," hinting at the female organ of generation (*yonirūpam*).

> The Śakti in the form of *yoni* is the state of Bhairava that indicates the wholeness (*pūrṇatā*) of the *nara-bhāva* or phenomenal reality which includes within itself the entire host of experients from *sakalas* (i.e. limited experients), *Mantra*, *Mantramaheśvara*, down to immobile beings (like plants, etc.) whose very life consists of empirical I-feeling and which is rightly designated as "ours" (*naḥ*). — p. 205

Still without decoding the *mantra*, Abhinavagupta comments on *tṛtīyaṁ brahma*, again defining *brahma* over against the Vedāntic meaning.

> *Brahman* (accepted in Trika) is that in whom the virility of the universe is inherent and who is full of the mass of bliss (*ānandaśaktighanaṁ*) that is surging forward for *visarga-viśleṣaṇa*, i.e. *visarga* or separation from Śiva and *viśleṣaṇa* or union (with Śakti). Such *Brahman* is vast

2. I follow R. Gnoli's emendation. J.S. has *pradeśita-yuktyāgama-nirūpita-nararūpāparābhaṭṭārikāsvabhāvaḥ śāktaḥ*, and Gnoli has amended it to: . . . *nirūpitaparāparābhaṭṭārikā-svabhāvaḥ* . . . It makes more sense that the *śākta* nature of the universe belongs to the intermediate level of *parāparā*.

> (*bṛhat*), all-pervading (*vyāpaka*) and nurtured. This *Brahman* is certainly not like that which is accepted by the followers of Vedānta and which is not far removed from absolute nihilism. This is called the third *Brahman*, because it is more identical with Śiva than *nara* or Śakti. Therefore, in Tantras and particularly here (in *Parātrīśikā*) this is the very core which has been taught as the object of worship.
>
> — p. 205

The aim is clearly *hṛdayavyāpti* (or *hṛdayānupraveśa*, p. 78), "pervasion of or penetration in the heart," which is the Divine Heart and the core of Reality. Apart from *yogīs* and mystics who achieve this penetration, as the Devī said, *vijñātamātreṇa* (v. 1), by mere intuitive knowledge, at once (*sadyaḥ*, cf. v. 1), Abhinavagupta concedes that even people who are following the normal religious practices externally, will gradually have their bondage loosened and be freed to enter that very heart (cf. pp. 205-06, Skt. p. 78), thus making a concession for *āṇavopāya* in the middle of *śāmbhava*. As a true spiritual master he immediately senses the danger of merely pretending to have reached that stage:

> This penetration into the Heart is not like a literal statement as in "I have entered the heart, it is the supreme goddess," rather it is the search inside the heart. This has been already said in detail.
>
> — p. 206

> The bonds of Śāstras cannot contract the Heart,
> nor can this world contaminate consciousness.
> May there be the state of absolute Fullness
> filled with absorption flashing forth,
> the true natural path of the essence of Plenitude.[3]

The introductory passage before coming to the actual exegesis and various ways of decoding the *mantra* revealed, is an invitation to enter the Heart, and an elucidation of the *kaulika* understanding of Heart. At the beginning (v. 2) Bhairavī asks about the *kaulikī śakti* dwelling in the Heart (*hṛdayasthā*), and Bhairava reveals that this *kaulika-vidhi* is present in the ether of His Heart (*mama hṛdvyomni*, v. 4). With the revelation of the core *mantra* this *kaulika-vidhi* is also manifested, still combining the secrecy (*guhyam*) as well as non-secrecy (*aguhyam* of v. 3). The

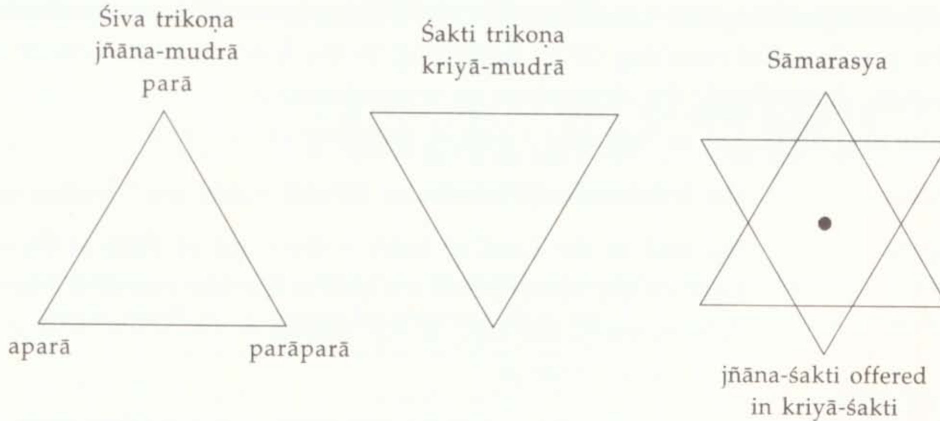
3. See Motto for the Sanskrit text (Skt. p. 78).

essence of the *kaulika-vidhi* or "prescription of totality" is precisely the Heart. But this Heart is the *sāmarasya* fusion of essence (p. 79), the union of Śiva and Śakti, *prakāśa* and *vimarśa*. At the ritual level it is experienced in the union of *vīra* and *yoginī*. In the case of the solitary spiritual hero (*ekavīra*), the same experience of the bliss of union "occurs by *yoga* consisting in repose in the bliss of the essential nature" (*ekavīrāyāmapi svarūpānandaviśrāntiyogena*, p. 78, line 3 from below). In the case of ordinary humans, bliss is experienced at the time of sexual union. But even this is not a mere natural joy, by quoting *Vijñāna Bhairava* (v. 68)[4] on an erotic *dhāraṇā*, it is connected to "the *yoga* of beatitude which is the worship of the heart" (p. 207, *evamānandayoga eva hṛdayapūjā*, p. 79). The *Trikatantrasāra* is quoted in confirmation, that "the flow of bliss is this worship which should be conceived on the triangle" (*ānandaprasaraḥ pūjā tāṁ trikoṇa prakalpayet*, p. 79).

The triangle (*trikoṇa*) is another symbol that connects the metaphysical — the three Energies *parā*, *parāparā* and *aparā*, with the physical, i.e. the female generative organ or *yoni* (cf. p. 206). Therefore the emendation from *nara* to *parāparā* (Gnoli) is fully justified.

At the centre of this triangle is "the goddess of the nature of the 'churning' Bhairava of supreme bliss" (*madhye devī parānanda bhairava mathanarūpa*,

Trikoṇa and Ṣaṭkoṇa



4. The context in which this *dhāraṇā* is quoted throws light on the understanding of the two "erotic" *dhāraṇā*s of the *Vijñāna Bhairava*: verse 68 does not refer to the sexual act but to the level of the *ekavīra*, whereas verse 69 refers to the *vīrayoginī* union.

p. 78, line 6 from below).[5] This refers to the divine level (*devatānāṁ saṁprāyaḥ*), the *yāmala* practice of *vīra* and *yoginī* has already been referred to, as also the *ekavīra*.[6]

The two triangles, of Śiva (with apex above) and Śakti (with apex below) are then identified with *jñāna-śakti* and *kriyā-śakti* respectively:

> Everything is pervaded by two *mudrās* — of the essence of *jñāna* and *kriyā-śakti*. In the case of deities *jñāna-mudrā* is internal and *kriyā-mudrā* external. In the case of *vīras* it is the reverse.
>
> — p. 79 Skt.

The theme of *mudrā* will engage us in the commentary on the following verse (11cd.).

Decoding the Mantra

It is only after this introduction that Abhinavagupta proceeds to the decoding of the *mantra* and commenting on verses 9-10. He does it in 16 different ways, parallel or corresponding to the 16 meanings of *Anuttara* given at the beginning by means of grammatical and semantic analysis (*nirvacana*).

Before embarking upon this exegesis I would like to refer to the *Tantrāloka* in its exposition of the core *mantra* or *hr̥dayabīja*. In the *Tantrāloka* Abhinavagupta places the interpretation of the *mantra* at different levels of the *upāyas* or means of realisation, since the practice and meaning differ according to the level of awareness of the practitioners. Accordingly the derivations or symbolisations of the components of the *mantra* also differ. Let us first take a simple decoding of the verse:

caturdaśa : the fourteenth (phoneme or vowel) = *au*

tithīśānta : the end of the Lord of *tithis* = the Lord of *tithis* is Śiva as Lord of the vowels, and the end is the last vowel: *ḥ, visarga*. Alternatively, the lord of the vowels is *aṁ, bindu*, and at its end comes *visarga*.

tr̥tīyaṁ brahma : the third *brahma* is derived variously — if it is taken to be the third *tattva* from above, it refers to Sadāśiva; if it is based on

5. Reference to *Manthānabhairava*.

6. Cf. *TĀ* 29.

the "definition" of *Brahman* in the Upaniṣads and *Bhagavad-Gītā oṁ tat sat*, it refers to *sat*, being.[7] Both begin with the *anacka s*.

Now joining the third *brahma* = *s* with the fourteenth vowel = *au*, and adding the end of vowels = *ḥ* or *visarga* the *bījamantra* SAUḤ is obtained.

In the *Tantrāloka* we find the following enigmatic description of the *mantra*:

> Indeed, this being (*sat* = *S*) whose root is Brahmā and which is called the sphere of Māyā (*māyāṇḍa*) would not be said to exist if it did not enter into the [trident = AU of the three energies of] precognitive impulse, cognition, and action. For it is through entering into these three energies that it is emitted (or projected; *visṛjyate* = *visarga: Ḥ*) into the consciousness of Bhairava. Or it is emitted outside because of that. Thus the fact that these [constituent elements of the cosmos] (exist *sat* = *S*) actually results in their being in the nature of the three energies (AU) in the emission (*visarga* = *Ḥ*) that is projected outward by the supreme consciousness.
>
> — *Tantrāloka* IV.186-89 (tr. A. Padoux, *Vāc*, p. 418)

The diphthong *au* is described as *triśūla*, trident in the *Mālinīvijayottara*, because it contains the three energies: Will, Knowledge and Activity. The symbolic shape of the *triśūla* assumes another meaning in the context of the individual way (*āṇavopāya*) where it is associated with the *kuṇḍalinī* rising through the body of the *yogī*.[8]

SAUḤ is the *bījamantra* of *Parā*, but the term *bīja* does not occur in verses 9-18, it comes later with a powerful meaning (vv. 25 and 35), in verse 9 it is only called "the Heart of the nature of Bhairava."[9]

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7. Jayaratha, on *TĀ* III.167 quotes *PT* v. 9 *tṛtīyaṁ brahma suśroṇi* and comments: *tṛtīyaṁ brahma sakāraḥ, yadgītaṁ 'oṁ tatsaditi brahmaṇastrividhaḥ smṛtaḥ.* "The third *brahma* is the phoneme *sa* (*s*), as it is said *'oṁ tat sat'* is the threefold definition of *Brahman*."

8. Cf. *TĀ* V.54-61. Cf. 60 cd-61ab: "It is in the great Heart where the great root (=*s*), the trident (=*au*) and the emission (*ḥ*) become one, that (the *yogī*) attains repose due to the universal fullness."

9. Other translators take *hṛdayaṁ bhairavātmanaḥ* as "the heart of the Self of Bhairava" (A. Padoux, Muller-Ortega).

In the 30th *āhnika* of the *Tantrāloka* Abhinavagupta gives a survey of *mantras*, where he derives the *mantra* of *Parā* in the following way:

> The *mantra* of *Parā* which is pervasion of being (*sadvyāpti*) consists in life (*jīva*, i.e. *s*), along with fourteenth (vowel, i.e. *au* and the *visarga*), it has been revealed by the great Lord as of various forms in the *Triśiroḥśāstra* (*Triśirobhairava Tantra*). Although in its essential form (it does not change), yet there are a number of variations. There (in that *mantra*) life (*s*) depends on breath (*prāṇa* = *ḥ*), or *prāṇa* is established in life.

After describing another variant of the *mantra sauḥ* he concludes:

> This (*mantra*) which is expressive of *Parā* has the nature of great wisdom. The supreme one-syllabled *mantra* is the clear knowledge of the Heart of Bhairava, consisting of nectar (*s*), established in the void (*ḥ*), or joined with *Sāvitrikā* (*au*), and united with two voids (*ḥ*) — this is the supreme Heart of (Goddess) *Parā*.
>
> — *TĀ* XXX.26-28, 31-33

It has to be stated at the outset that this *bījamantra*, "the seed of the Heart," the "ambrosial seed" (or "seed of immortality," *amṛtabīja*) is not meant for "recitation" but with all its implied phonic symbolism it is to be meditated upon in an all-embracing way or realised intuitively, depending on the level or *upāya* of the practitioner.

A. Padoux gives an encompassing description of the *mantra*: "With its three constituent phonemes we have the Absolute itself (*S*), the triad of Śiva's fundamental powers in their absolute fullness (*AU*), and finally the perennial surging forth (both internally and externally, but always within consciousness, the stuff the world is made of) of the Godhead's creative flow, the throbbing of the Divine Heart (*Ḥ*). One understands easily, therefore, that to meditate this *mantra*, to grasp its full meaning directly through an all-embracing intellectual intuition, is a liberating experience" (*Vāc*, p. 419).

We shall now look at the complexity of this mantric meditation in the sixteen interpretations given in the *Vivaraṇa* (selecting some examples).

These sixteen *nirvacanas* take the lead of the sixteen vowels which are the *bījas* at the level of Śiva.

[This] i.e. the third *brahma*, viz. *hṛdaya-sa* (or *amṛta-bīja*) joined with the fourteenth vowel, i.e. *au*, is linked with the sixteenth, i.e. *visarga*, *aḥ*, which occurs at the end of *tithīśa*, the soul of fifteen *kalā*s. (Thus it becomes *sa+au+aḥ = sauḥ*.)

Yutaṁ may be interpreted as *yugmam* or a pair. With the fourteenth, the pair makes sixteen which is the *īśa* or the presiding deity of the fifteen vowels, viz. *visarga* (*aḥ*).

Its (i.e. of the *visarga*) end is the seventeenth, viz. the *anuttara* or the transcendental aspect (of Reality). *Hṛdaya* or heart is that which is linked with it (i.e. with *anuttara*). It has already been stated in detail that all things whether external such as a jar, or internal, such as pleasure, take hold of that germ (the source of all existence) as the highest Reality. Therefore that (seed) is the heart or core (of Reality). — p. 210

The last part reads:

tasyāntaḥ saptadaśyanuttarakalā tadanvitaṁ hṛdayaṁ[2] — *sarvāṇi ghaṭasukhādīni vastūni tāmeva bījasattām paramārtha-rūpeṇākrāmantītyuktaṁ vistarataḥ, ata eva tat hṛdayam* — p. 79 ll. 11-13

What Abhinavagupta achieves by this hermeneutics is to state the transcendence of *Anuttara* (by making it the seventeenth *kalā*) and the all-containing nature of the *bīja* or seed. The number 16 (*tithi*s, vowels) still belongs to the immanent aspect (*kalā*).

Right from the beginning of his commentary on the *mantra* Abhinavagupta does not dwell on its "recitation" aspect, but on its metaphysical meaning, thus not very different from the 16 meanings of *Anuttara*.[10] The difference lies precisely in the fact that here we have the *svarūpa*, the symbol, the condensed form in a seed, and not the concept. Hence "Heart," as we shall see, assumes the whole power of a symbol.

Actually the first interpretation starts from *a*:

10. R. Gnoli begins the numbering of the 16 meanings with the following one, Jaideva Singh numbers it as the 2nd which cannot be correct.

(Abhinavagupta gives this interpretation by splitting *caturdaśa* into *catur* (four) and *daśā* (states): This is an interpretation with reference to the phoneme *a*. That which is *brahma,* i.e. *sāmarasya* or equipoise, in other words, which is the conjunction of the four states (*caturdaśa*), i.e. *udyoga, avabhāsa, carvaṇa* and *vilāpana* of the subject and the object is the primal undifferentiated state. Being linked with that means "inseparable from that."

The vowels which are up to the end of *ū*, are known as *tithīśa*, because out of them, the other remaining phonemes are born. The last ones of the vowels coming at the end of the above *tithīśa* vowels are the four immortal phonemes, viz. *ṛ, ṝ, ḷ, ḹ*. *Brahma* is well connected with these vowels. From the point of view of ascent Śiva who is higher than *nara* and Śakti is the third. Therefore, the third *brahma* is identical with supreme Śiva. . . .

By accomplishing the fusion of the stir of the state of the subject and object within the Self, he enters the state of *anuttara*, the very heart of the universe which can be accessible only to *jñāna* (gnosis) characterised by identity, or *yoga* characterised by activity.

— p. 211

All the interpretations are offered with the purpose of defining the "third *brahma*" by the initial vowel and the corresponding *Śakti,* besides the analysis of *caturdaśayutam* and *tithīśāntasamanvitam*, which compounds are dissolved in different ways.[11] As Gnoli remarks: "In all these interpretations, that which in each case is interpreted as one of the sixteen vowels is the heart, which does not always appear as the subject, but which is understood. The meaning is, in short, that the heart is the third *brahma*, etc. and is identified with Bhairava."[12]

Let us consider two more examples of this hermeneutics. The four "void vowels" (*śūnyacatuṣka*) offer an interesting connection with the elements.

The interpretations are given with reference to the four void vowels (*śūnya-catuṣka*), viz. *ṛ, ṝ, ḷ, ḹ*. First of all the interpretation is being given with reference to *ṛ*. That is the void or empty *ākāśa* (ether) symbolised by *ṛ* in which the condition (*daśā*) of the four (*catur*), viz. the earth,

11. Cf. R. Gnoli's note 424a on p. 297.

12. Ibid., pp. 298-99 (translated from the Italian).

water, fire and air either disappear in the gross form in *saṁhāra* or withdrawal of the world-process or in the subtle form remain as void ether. The *icchā* (*i*) inhering in *ṛ* (*r* + *i* =*ṛ*), considered in a reverse order with reference to *kriyā* (*ānanda, icchā, jñāna, kriyā*) is the third *brahma*. Linked (*yutam*) with that void ether, the third *brahma* may be termed *icchā*. This *brahma* is full of the external glow of *tithīśvara*, i.e. the sun. *Arka* or the sun is the symbol of *pramāṇa* or knowledge. So *tithīśānta-samanvitaṁ* means joined with the *tejas* or glow of *pramāṇa* or knowledge. — p. 214

The third *brahma* is known as *icchā* inasmuch as *i* inheres in *ḷ* (*l*+*i* = *ḷ*). It is *vyoma* or *śūnya* (ether) which is the inner state (*antaradaśā*) of four (elements), viz. earth, water, fire and air, is its base (*ādhāra*). Therefore, it is linked with that. This *brahma* being connected with some reality which follows the *tithīśānta*, i.e. the glow of fire (*vahni*), known as *pramātṛ-tejas* is of the nature of the void (*vyomātma*). — p. 215

As in *ṝ* phoneme, the third *brahma* inherent in the phonemes *ḷ* is *īśāna* (*ḷ*+*ī*= *ḹ*) itself. This also is connected, on the one hand, with the ether, the inner void, the base of the four categories of earth, water, fire and air (*caturdaśa-yutam*) and on the other, with something indefinable that follows the *pramātṛ-tejas* (*tithīśānta*).

Only this one plunges with tremendous momentum into the fullest form of the void (*paripūrṇa śūnya*) which is Bhairava itself.[13]

What this means is the following: When *icchā* together with *īśāna* which is its own nature, reaches the *vyoma* plane (i.e. the plane of the void) of objective experience (*vedya*), then it rests in slight luminosity for a while, suddenly enters the plane of the void (*vyomabhūmim*) which is unbounded (*aparyantatām*), invariably steady (*niścalām*) almost like wood or stone. About such *yogīs* as have entered the state of the void which is like deep sleep without the awareness of any object whatsoever (*apavedya-suṣupta*), it has been said: "Even the sound of a kettledrum or bronze cymbal cannot awaken him from his state of absorption." — p. 215

13. This is an extraordinary "definition" of Bhairava who is described either in terms of fullness or void but here combining both in a sort of *coincidentia oppositorum*. (cf. also *Vijñāna Bhairava* with its *dhāraṇā*s leading to either state).

This shows the connection of these apparently abstruse interpretations with yogic states. As expected, the two last "vowels," *aṁ* and *aḥ* or *bindu* and *visarga*, are specially significant:

> In accordance with what has been said earlier, *brahma*, joined with the distributed form of the forty categories and the group of vowel-consonants, i.e. *brahma* appearing in the innumerable forms of the external world is the *bindu* or dot (*anusvāra*). It is the *hṛdaya* or the very core of Reality, viz. Bhairava in his aspect of knowledge. Consequently, this core or *bindu* is the nature of the third *brahma*.

"16th interpretation: (with reference to the phoneme *aḥ*)

(i) *From the point of view of external visarga*: All this multitude of categories darts forth as Bhairava and being emitted outside and expanding, it is known as *brahma* inasmuch as it is of the nature of expansion and abides externally.

(ii) *From the point of view of internal visarga*: It is the stage of *visarga* which is identified with Bhairava, which by setting aside all exclusion indicative of difference and having acquired "the state of everything being all things" has grown and is thus present also as an internal *visarga*. (Consequently there are with reference to *visarga* two aspects of the third *brahma* — external and internal.) This has been determined with attentiveness.

Thus the pervasion of the third *brahma* of sixteen kinds has been described with reference to vowels. Its pervasion with reference to each consonant has already been described." — p. 217

The "third *Brahma* joined with the four" has yet another field of interpretation, more down-to-earth, by linking it with the four stages (according to the "etymology" of *catur-daśā*) of life and the forms of the body. The stages of life are: (1) childhood, (2) youth, (3) old age, and (4) taking on another body after death. The different bodies are the gross body consisting of the five elements (*pañcabhautikam*), the body consisting of *prāṇa*, the *puryaṣṭaka* or subtle body, and the inner self (*antarātmā*). This is also the third *brahma*.

> Being pervasive, it is void, and the heart abiding in it is of Śakti (*atra ca hṛdayaṁ śaktyātma*). In fact, it is *Śiva-bīja* (*bīja*, i.e. source of all existence) who is all awareness (*bodhātmaka*) and who in progressive

> compactness or solidification having adopted (1) physical body, (2) *prāṇa*, (3) *puryaṣṭaka*, (4) *śūnya* or consciousness devoid of any object, and (5) *turīya* or the fourth state of consciousness or the metaphysical Self has expanded into five kinds of experients with particular kinds of vehicles. These are called respectively (1) external self (*bāhyātmā*), (2) *prāṇa* as the self (*bhūtātmā*), (3) the subtle body as the self which carries the soul from one state of existence to another (*ātivāhikātmā*), (4) the inner self (*antarātmā*), and (5) the supreme self (*paramātmā*). This is the *hṛdaya* (centre), i.e. Bhairava Himself. — p. 218

The Means for Entry into Brahman: *Praveśopāya*

In the sequence Abhinavagupta relates the *bījamantra* to various tāntric practices by ever more ingenious ways of *nirvacana* or semantic analysis. I need not go into the grammatical details but I confine myself to the content. He explicitly relates the *mantroddhāra* (v. 9) to the yogic-erotic practice of *vīra* and *yoginī* (p. 211, pp. 82-83 Skt.), to the substances produced in their ritual union, and to the other not socially approved substances such as alcohol. The purpose of these apparently shocking practices is clearly stated: "These substances inasmuch measure as is obtainable destroy all taint of difference" (p. 222, *tadetānī dravyāṇi yathālābhaṁ bhedamavilāpakāni*, p. 83). It is at this point that Abhinavagupta goes into the question of overcoming limitations and restrictions of the mental and social conventions, all tainted by *bheda*, separation.

Psychologically it all starts in the mind which creates doubts, narrowness and depression:

> The following process is generally observed. Doubt which brings about narrowness of mind is generative of the first sprout of the mundane tree, and then it expands, becomes mature, and finally brings about the very fruit (i.e. complete involvement) of mundane existence. It has been fabricated by the awakened ones in such a way that it may become stationary in the case of the unawakened ones. In the case of fools, once a doubt is entertained, it gets rooted in their mind, it fructifies in diverse ways for them, according to their peculiar nature.
>
> Therefore, on account of diverse imagination doubts assume different forms and are described as *adharma* (unrighteous) etc. They vary according to each scripture and each country. As has been

> said, "Just as a plunderer carries away the valuables of the house, even so depression saps away the vitality of the body." (*SpK*. III.8) — p. 222

The relative nature of the ideas of good and evil or high and low, the very basis of *saṁsāra*, is exposed and liberated by breaking societal norms. The aim is:

> When that doubt is instantly dissolved, then the stain of the trouble of the psycho-physical limitations of the aspirant is cast out and he enters the heart of Bhairava. Therefore, one should in every way, practise the discipline that leads to the heart of Bhairava. — p. 222

A defence of tāntric and *kaula* practices is supported by Tantras such as *Tilakaśāstra*, *Bhargaśikhā*, *Vīrāvalī* and *Sarvācāra*, stressing the non-difference of all things. In this context Abhinavagupta makes a powerful statement against the distinctions on the basis of caste:

> Therefore, in *Trika Śāstra*, this very activity almost without any curb is worship. All things are available for the fulfilment of this worship. The course of knowledge has been described in detail. Regarding the caste — brāhmaṇas, etc., there is no fixed principle, for the caste distinction is artificial. — p. 223
>
> *jātīnām . . . nāsti sthitiḥ* (Skt. p. 84) could also be translated as "the castes . . . have no standing/basis."

What all this suggests is that the overcoming of narrowness and division is a necessary part of the liberation consisting in attaining the Heart which is Bhairava. Therefore the whole topic of limited, dualistic thought (*vikalpa*) and its overcoming is part of the exegesis of the *bījamantra*.

> The fourteenth vowel, i.e. the middle one between *o* and *aṁ* is *au*. *Tithīśānta*, i.e. that final of the vowels, i.e. *aḥ*. *Tṛtīyam brahma* is that which comes in between *a* and *ha*, i.e. *sa*. This is really the *mantra* (i.e. *sauḥ*) which is the generating seed of the universe. Whatever existent (*sat*) represented by that *sa* appears whether in the sphere of earth, *prakṛti* or *māyā* that falling within *icchā*, *jñāna* or *kriyā* is a triad (represented by *au*) and being an epitome of all, is delivered in and by Śiva (represented by the *visarga*, *aḥ*). Thus this indeterminate (*nirvikalpaka*) continuum of manifestation goes on ceaselessly.

> A determinate thought-construct is used when it is meant to express predominantly a sense of difference, connected as it may be with the three series of time. . . . On the contrary, even the stage of Śiva being that of liberation is for the unfortunate ones always a desert or a vast forest owing to the fear of transmigratory state.[14]

That even a state of disturbing thoughts (*vikalpa*) does not diminish the divinity which is ever present is assured by the frequent reference to a *kārikā* by Utpaladeva:

> He who knows that all this glory (of manifestation) is mine (i.e. belongs to the Self), who realises that the entire cosmos is his Self possesses *maheśatā* (lordship) even when dichotomising thought-constructs have their play. — *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā* IV.11

Abhinavagupta returns to the initial phonemes of the "seed of the Heart": *sa*, which he connects with other words beginning with *s*:

> *Sa*, the nature of which is the ambrosia of the highest beatitude, casting the host of all other phonemes within itself, shines forth in manifestation. That which is the highest nature of *satya* (truth), *sukha* (happiness), *saṁpat* (acquisition), *sattā* (existence), all beginning with *sa*, is experienced at the time of the appearance of the sound *si* to express pleasurable sensation when there is the quivering of the male organ and contraction-cum-expansion of the female organ. That is really the non-*māyīya* nature of *satya*, etc. — p. 224

This phoneme alone can express all levels of meaning, from the erotic (*sītkāra*) to the metaphysical. The practice of the *bījamantra* can enable the *yogī* to apprehend meaning by a mere hint or one phoneme. In confirmation he again quotes the *Yogasūtra* (III.17).

> There is an intermixture of words, the object denoted and the knowledge (indicated by the word) by mutual imposition. If one practises *saṁyama* on each of them separately, he can acquire the knowledge of the sound of all creatures. — quoted on p. 225

It is a kind of linguistic *siddhi* which is acquired by the practice of the *mantra*. Here the non-conventional power of language in all its parts becomes clear:

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14. Here Abhinavagupta breaks out in poetry with a rare reference to fate (*daiva*) as the cause of sāṁsāric existence (p. 84 Skt.).

> In Vedic grammar and divine Śāstras like *Śiva-Sūtras*, an etymological explanation of words occurring as *mantra* (sacred formula) or in initiation, in accordance with the intent of each letter of the word is considered to be perfectly appropriate. That is not conventional; the etymological explanation of every word, owing to unforeseen destiny has not reached the common people. So the nature of the phoneme *sa* is also like this. The explanation of *au* and the *visarga* (of the mantra *sauḥ*) has already been given. — p. 225

Much of the speculation is based on the *Mālinīvijayottara*. We have not gone into the cosmic spheres (*aṇḍa*) and their relation to the *tattva*s and phonemes. Here is a sample of the connection:

> *sārṇena tritaya triśūlena caturthakam* ।
> *sarvātītaṁ visargeṇa parā vyāptirudāhṛtā* ॥ — Skt. p. 85

> Three spheres (viz. *pṛthivī, prakṛti* and *māyā*) are pervaded by the phoneme *sa*, the fourth one (viz. the Śakti sphere) is pervaded by the trident, i.e. *au* and the one that transcends all, viz. Śiva is indicated by *visarga*, i.e. *aḥ*. This is how the pervasion of *parā* is described.
> — *MVT* IV.25, p. 225

Justifying the coded or "secret" language Abhinavagupta says that it is a rule concerning *mantra*s that they should not be written in a book (*ata evālekhyaṁ pustake iti niyamaḥ*, p. 86).[15] He quotes a famous verse from the *Kulacūḍāmaṇi Tantra*.[16]

> *ekaṁ sṛṣṭimayaṁ bījam ekā mudrā ca khecarī* ।
> *dvavetau yasya jāyete so 'tiśāntapade sthitaḥ* ॥

> Only one is the seed of creation, only one is the *mudrā*, i.e. *khecarī*. Whoever conquers these two is established in a state of surpassing peace.

Thus the *bīja* SAUḤ is identified with the "seed of creation," *sṛṣṭibīja*.

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15. The term *alekhya, alekha,* also related to *alakṣya,* has had far-reaching influence on the medieval and later *nirguṇa saṁpradāya*s, up to the Bauls and the Mahimā Dharma of Orissa, whose *mantra* is *mahimā alekha*. Cf. Bhima Bhoi, *Verses from the Void*, ed. by B. Bäumer and J. Beltz, Delhi (Manohar) 2009, my Introduction.

16. Quoted in *Śivasūtra Vimarśinī* II.5.

After this long and multi-layered exposition on the *hṛdayabīja* Abhinavagupta takes up the remaining part of verse 10: *etannāyoginījāto nārudro labhate sphuṭam*. He gives an ingenious interpretation of *na+a+aḥ*:

Explanation of etannaḥ . . . yogavimuktidam:

> (*Naḥ* = *na+a+aḥ*, i.e. *na*, the first letter of *Mālinī*, a, the first letter of *Mātṛkā*, symbol of *vīra*, and *aḥ*, symbol of *visarga-śakti yoginī*. The person born from the union of these is known as *yoginī-jāta*). Only such a person can have realisation of the heart of Bhairava, i.e. *amṛtabīja* or the *mantra sauḥ* in whom:
>
> 1. The state of an experiencer has arisen (*jātaḥ prādurbhūta-pramātṛbhāvaḥ*) from the union of *Śiva-vīra* who is to be cognised by means of *na* (the first letter of *Mālinī*) and *a* (the first letter of *Mātṛkā*) and *visarga-śakti* (i.e. *yoginī*).
>
> 2. Or in him who is Rudra, Rudra is one who can successfully keep off or destroy the bonds of *māyā*. He is the veritable man. He alone can clearly realise it. He who is not Rudra, nor born of *yoginī* cannot realise it. The realisation of *amṛtabīja* can bestow *sadyoga* or identity with Bhairava, which is ascertained as liberation (in Trika). The word *sadyaḥ* denotes immediately. This suggests that he who realises it is of this kind, i.e. Rudra or born of *yoginī*; no one else can obtain it. He who is of the above kind realises it clearly. Thus he realises the heart, i.e. *sauḥ* which offers liberation immediately. — p. 226

The condition for "obtaining" this *mantra* is therefore the unification of the three components of Trika: Śiva, Śakti and Nara (*Rudra*).

Commentary on Verses 11-18

hṛdayaṁ devadevasya
sadyo yogavimuktidam |
asyoccāre kṛte saṁyaṅ
mantramudrāgaṇo mahān || 11 ||

sadyastanmukhatāmeti
svadehāveśalakṣaṇam |
muhūrtaṁ smarate yastu
cumbakena abhimudritaḥ || 12 ||

sa badhnāti tadā sarvaṁ
mantramudrāgaṇaṁ naraḥ |
atītānāgatānarthān
pṛṣṭo 'sau kathayatyapi || 13 ||

praharādyadabhipretaṁ
devatārūpam uccaran |
sākṣāt paśyatyasaṁdigdham
ākṛṣṭam rudraśaktibhiḥ || 14 ||

praharadvayamātreṇa
vyomastho jāyate smaran |
trayeṇa mātaraḥ sarvā
yogīśvaryo mahābalāḥ || 15 ||

vīra vīreśvarāḥ siddhā
balavāñ chākinīgaṇaḥ |
āgatya samayaṁ datvā
bhairaveṇa pracoditāḥ || 16 ||

yacchanti paramāṁ siddhiṁ
phalaṁ yadvā samīhitam |
anena siddhāḥ setsyanti
sādhayanti ca mantriṇaḥ || 17 ||

yatkiñcid bhairave tantre
sarvamasmāt prasiddhyati |
adṛṣṭamaṇḍalo 's pyevam . . . || 18 ||

These verses contain the *siddhis* or achievements by means of the *bījamantra*, and it is clear from the brevity of the commentary that Abhinavagupta did not attach much importance to these powers, rather he gave them another interpretation than the usual one.

First he gives a rather traditional explanation of *mantras* and *mudrās*:

Explanation of *asya uccāra kṛte . . . svadehāveśalakṣaṇam*:

> *Mantras* are the sacred phonemes both worldly and divine. They save by reflection (*mananatrāṇarūpāḥ*). For worldly purposes, they are

> of the form of thought-construct, i.e. *vikalpa*; as divine or transcendental, they are full of *saṁvit-śakti* (the power of higher consciousness). The *mudrā*s are the particular dispositions of the hands and feet of the nature of *kriyā-śakti*. *Mantramudrāgaṇa*, therefore, means a host of great powers brought into being by *mantra* and *mudrā*, which in the collective form is identical with *parāśakti* (the supreme śakti). — p. 227

The fruit of "perfectly 'reciting' this *mantra*" (*asyoccāre kṛte saṁyak*) is the "penetration in one's own body" (*svadehāveśa*). No wonder Abhinavagupta attaches the utmost importance to *āveśa*, entering, pervading, being possessed, since it comes close to the highest state of Divine absorption: *samāveśa*. Of course, *sva* is understood as *ātman*, of the Self.

> *Āveśaḥ* means immediately by the entrance (in oneself) of the highest nature, there is the disappearance of the stupefaction which connotes dependence on others and the emergence of the stage of the conscious subject permeated by autonomy. . . . So the whole phrase (*svadehāveśalakṣaṇaṁ*) means in a manner characterised by the penetration in him of the expansion of *īhā* which has the divine nature of *prakāśa* and *vimarśa*. The supreme state of the Experient characterised by such *īhā* is *svadehāveśaḥ*. That is the (real) enunciation of this *mantra*, i.e. *sauḥ* which arises in the above manner, being established in the highest aspect, i.e. the aspect of the supreme conscious Self (*ūrdhvācaraṇe sthitau satyām*). — p. 227

By way of different *nirvacana*s he arrives at:

> By the word *sadyaḥ* (immediately) is suggested absorption in the *anuttara* stage. *Tanmukhatām eti* means that after *samāveśa*, one acquires supreme consciousness (*para-rūpa*). — p. 228

In the *Tantrāloka* Abhinavagupta gives a mystical "summary" of the *mantra* SAUḤ:

> By unifying the great root (*S*), the trident (*AU*) and the emission (*Ḥ*) in the supreme Heart (the *yogī*) attains repose due to universal Fullness.[17] — *TĀ* V.60cd-61ab

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17. *ekīkṛtamahāmūlaśūlavaisargike hṛdi* |
parasminneti viśrāntiṁ sarvāpūraṇayogataḥ ||

The Relation of Time to Spiritual Powers

The remaining verses (12b-18a) are very much related to time and units of time such as *muhūrta* (48 minutes), *prahara* (3 hours, a unit of the day), etc. where the fruit of the practice, the respective power attained, depends on the duration of the "recitation" (*uccāra*) or "remembrance" (*smaraṇa, smṛti*) of the *mantra*. Abhinavagupta transposes the literal meaning of the Tantra into the realm of timelessness. Hence a whole meditation on time takes the start from these verses. The practice whose duration is mentioned is *smaraṇa* (*smṛti, yaḥ smarate* in v. 12), literally "memory, remembrance," but which has a specific meditative meaning in relation to *mantra*. Abhinavagupta quotes a definition of *smṛti/smaraṇa* from the *Triśirobhairava* in the *Tantrāloka*, in the context of *āṇavopāya*, the only means where time actually plays a role, since it belongs to *kriyā* or activity. It follows the mention of the "extraction of the *mantra*."[18]

> Memory means recalling, and in reality it is already present preceding all modalities (or: states). Its essence is *mantra*. It unites that which is to come about to its own nature. — *TĀ* V.137

We need not go into the commentary by Jayaratha, but it shows the complexity of *smṛti* which is far more than "memory." A. Padoux comments: "Thus the outstanding role of memory, its eminent nature, coincides somehow with the pre-eminence of the *mantras* as supreme consciousness" (*Vāc*, p. 398). In the *Vivaraṇa* Abhinavagupta explains *smarate* by *anusaṁdhatte*, the verbal form of *anusandhāna*, the unifying awareness, a kind of contemplation linking two realities, hence the practice suitable to a non-dual system.

Commenting on *muhūrta*, Abhinavagupta immediately goes to add: "Although (the reality of the *mantra*) is not determined by time, yet the word *muhūrta* (hour) is used with reference to the experience of other experients which is temporal" (*akālakalitatve 'pi parakalanāpekṣayā*, p. 87 Skt.). He in this manner makes a concession to those practitioners at the level of *āṇavopāya*.

> He "remembers" means he applies the unifying awareness (*anusaṁdhatte*). He binds all the host of *mantras* and *mudrās* means that he unifies them in his own self because of his non-dual

18. Cf. *TĀ* V.137-39.

> consciousness (*advayataḥ*). How? by means of *cumbaka*, which means by his body of energy touching the universal aspect he "impresses" with *mudrā*s everywhere, in an act of awareness (*cumbakena viśvasparśakena śāktena rūpeṇābhitaḥ sarvato mudritaṁ mudraṇaṁ kṛtvā. . .* p. 87).
>
> He who, being stamped with the pulsation of *Śakti*, has joined his consciousness in congruous unity with Śiva who is the embodiment of this kind of true state, i.e. *sauḥ*; he alone accomplishes this, not stone, etc. which come under the category of *nara*. — p. 228

He then comments on the *siddhi* of foretelling past and future: *atītānāgatān arthān pṛṣṭo 'sau kathayatyapi* (v. 13). In justification of this power he quotes the famous verse of the *Spanda Kārikā*.

> As the sustainer of this universe (i.e. Śiva) when eagerly entreated with desire accomplishes all the desires abiding in the heart of the embodied yogī who is awake after causing the rise of the moon (*soma*) and the sun (*sūrya*). — *SpK* III, 1; p. 229

Not being constrained by time (*akālakalita*) means being in the present:

> One and the same *yogī* even in memory (which refers to the past) and imagination (which refers to the future) remains equally in the present. Past and future do not exist for him. As has been said:
>
> "It is better to remain in the present which is not limited by the past and the future." When the state of the experient has been existing from before (from endless time) and there cannot be any increase or decrease in it, how can it tolerate such limitations of the present? "So and so knows *this*, does this." Therefore, it has *sakṛdvibhātatva*, i.e. it is shining eternally. Therefore has it been said. It is because of this [i.e. limitation] that the present time requires a reference to the past, etc., i.e. to the past and future. In the absence of limitation, because of non-applicability of expectancy, reality is undetermined by time. — p. 229

The quotation about being in the present comes from the *Śrīḍāmaratantra*, which Abhinavagupta has quoted in his *Mālinīvijayavārttika* (I.155-56), precisely in the context of the overcoming of time, called also *kālagrāsa*, "swallowing of time." Let us see it in the entire context:

When a meditator (*yogī*) intent on devouring time comes to rest in the limit of consciousness for only a moment (*tuṭi*), he at once becomes "one who moves in the void of consciousness." (*khecaraḥ*) — 152cd-153ab

For it is taught that time, which is the appearance of the world, is the vibration of the rays of one's own consciousness which is projecting [the world]. . . . Therefore the one . . . who is completely immersed in the devouring of time, spontaneously (*svayam*) becomes "one who moves in the void [of consciousness]." — 153cd-155ab

This has been said by Śiva in the *Śrīḍāmaratantra*: "After immobilising one's circle of rays and tasting the supreme nectar he should dwell in bliss within the present that is not divided from both past and future." — 155cd-156ab[19]

Earlier in the *Vivaraṇa*, in another context, Abhinavagupta has made the powerful statement that

> time is only a thought-construct, what is time in the introverted consciousness? The essence of time consists in the experience of successive appearances and disappearances of objects. Its essence consists in the absence of the awareness of introverted consciousness which is timeless. — p. 157[20]

Abhinavagupta emphasises the relativity of time, which is manifested by the Lord as *kālaśakti*:

> Those who are in the waking state, what they experience as a *ghaṭikā* (24 minutes) is experienced by subjects in a dream state variously, as a day, a *prahara* (unit of 3 hours), or year, etc.[21] — Skt. p. 87 end

Here again, his psychological observation is an aid to the spiritual-metaphysical understanding of time.

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19. Tr. by J. Hanneder, Abhinavagupta's *Philosophy of Revelation*, pp. 84-85. The last line reads: *kālobhayāparicchinne vartamāne sukhī bhavet*.

20. *antarmukhe saṁvidātmani proktanayena kaḥ kālaḥ* . . . , Cf. a similar discussion about *krama* and *akrama* on p. 58 (Skt.), see p. 161 (tr.).

21. Reference not found.

Similarly, he gives another "etymology" of *prahara* (which occurs in verses 14-15), instead of taking it as a unit of time he interprets it as "dissolution" (*prakṛṣṭo haraḥ saṁhāraḥ*, p. 88).

While commenting on the phrase *ākṛṣṭam rudraśaktibhiḥ* of verse 14 ("drawn near by the powers of Rudra") he dissolves the word *Rudra* in two verbs: *rodhana* and *drāvaṇa*: He does interpret them in the sense of yogic powers, but of a higher order:

> *Ru* denotes *rodhana* and *dra* denotes *drāvaṇa*. *Rodhana* in this context is a technical term. It means *saṁhāra*, i.e. withdrawal or dissolution. *Drāvaṇa* is also a technical term in this context. It means *sṛṣṭi*, i.e. manifestation. Being drawn, i.e. going in a state of absorption through the *saṁhāra* and *sṛṣṭi śakti*s, he (the *yogī*) fully perceives, i.e. experiences. This is what is meant to be said. (First of all, there is *rodhana* — the state of inward dissolution and then there is *drāvaṇa*, the state of external expansion.)
>
> 1. ***Rodhana — the state of inward dissolution***: What is said to be perception or experience (*yadidaṁ darśanaṁ nāma*) that comes to the *yogī* who, having reached the state of *akula* in which the waves of all the external *vikalpa*s (thought-constructs) have dissolved and full of *icchā-śakti* which has reached its highest capacity by coming in contact with *svātantrya* (divine autonomy) full of endless glory (*ananta-mahima-svātantrya-yogāt*), realises the dissolution of *icchā* in *anuttara*.
>
> 2. ***Drāvaṇa — the state of external expansion***: Then the same *icchā* becoming externally oriented assumes the aspect of *jñāna-śakti*, having slightly indistinct appearance of difference as its object.
>
> (*Rodhana even in external orientation and Drāvaṇa even in internal orientation*:)
>
> The *jñāna-śakti* of the nature of *sāmānya spanda* (general pulsation) expanding towards the outside, assumes the form of the senses of the nature of specific *spanda* and the *yogī* at this state achieves the *rodhana* or arresting of the senses in the same condition outside. This is indeed *atana* in *rodhana*, i.e. *sātatyāgamana* of continuous movement in *rodhana* or arresting. Therefore, *rodhana* is both *drāvaṇa* or expansion and *bhakṣaṇa* (swallowing) or

> dissolution. This process is known as *vamana-bhakṣaṇa*, i.e. both ejecting outside and swallowing within. *Darśana* or experience is of the nature of *prathā*, i.e. it involves both *sāmānya* or general *jñāna* and *viśeṣa* or specific *jñāna*, and what is *prathā* involves diversity of expansion (*prathāyāśca tathavidha-vaicitrya-yogāt*). A state of indecision or doubt depends on two alternatives, e.g. whether this is the trunk of a tree or a human being. Even this uncertainty has an element of certainty about it (for certainty it is one of these and cannot be anything else). Thus the divine power achieves what is hard to accomplish. — pp. 230-31

The identification of the *yogī* with Bhairava is connected with *smṛti-smaraṇa* which would be better translated by "awareness":

> Such a *yogī* is verily Bhairava who has the power of memory which is *parāpara*, i.e. which assimilates a past experience to a present one. That is why it has been said only in "two *praharas*," i.e. by placing two cognitions (*para* and *apara*) together. The *para* or the previous or the past *prahara* is that of actual experience and the *apara* or the second *prahara* is the cognition of the sameness in the present. Remembering the *amṛtabīja* in this way (i.e. in *parāpara* way) he becomes settled in *vyoma* or empty space (*vyomastho jāyate*), i.e. he acquires the status of an experient in *puryaṣṭaka* (at the time of perception or first experience) and *śūnya* or void (at the time of *apohana*). When his perceptual experience is characterised by *prahara*, i.e. by complete absorption, he deliberates upon it by calling it up in memory again and again. "*Sākṣāt paśyati asaṁdigdhaṁ . . . rudra śaktibhīḥ*" is connected with this as with the previous one. It has been said that till that time even the memory is like the original experience itself. It is said that he is united with the *vikalpa śakti* of the nature of *apara*, i.e. *apohana*, i.e. he experiences even the gap occurring between the first experience and its recall. — p. 231

By interpreting the *siddhis* mentioned in verses 15-17 Abhinavagupta avoids any dualistic understanding and brings every word into a non-dualist yogic meaning.

> *Yogeśvaryaḥ* means those who have gained *aiśvarya*, i.e. *svātantrya* or autonomy by means of yoga characterised by identity with the inner genuine experient. *Mahābalāḥ* means *mahat balaṁ yāsāṁ tāḥ*, i.e. they whose prowess is great. The *bala* or prowess here means the power of expanding in all directions without any check in contrast to the

external senses. "They" refers to the inner *śakti* (*antaḥ-karaṇa-dīdhatayaḥ*), viz. *manas, buddhi* and *ahaṁkāra*. These are also perfect because regardless of the restraints advocated by all the ordinary empirical texts, they are full of activity prompted by the ardour or autonomy.

Vīrāḥ — *Vīra*s in this context are what are called the organs of sense and the organs of action (of such *yogī*s). They also become perfect. *Vīreśvarāḥ*, i.e. the lords of the *vīra*s or in other words, the energies of *ka* and other phonemes also become perfect.

Śākinīgaṇah means Brāhmī and other divinities who appear with the manifestation of *ka* and other phonemes and who are a host of powers denoting different mental modes such as attraction, aversion, etc. This host of powers also becomes perfect. Since it is perfect, therefore it is powerful (*balavāna*).

Paramāṁ siddhiṁ yacchanti means (they) offer the *paramā*-perfection; *paramā* means *parasyamā*, i.e. *pramiti* or correct notion of the supreme experient (*parasya*). This *siddhi* or perfection is *vikalpātmikā*, i.e. even with external means of proof, the *yogī* is able to pinpoint the nature of the supreme, e.g. such the supreme (*asau paraḥ*) or they offer the (most) desired object of the *yogī*, viz. the realisation of the (real) "I."

— p. 232

Although Abhinavagupta concedes that even practitioners (*mantriṇaḥ*) of lower (i.e. dualistic) Śāstras will achieve perfection, but even they will attain liberation-in-life through that very Heart (i.e. *hṛdayabīja*, p. 89 Skt.), and even those who achieve it by the *yoga* of *aṇimā*, etc. (the supernatural powers).

evameṣa parameśvara eva hṛdayātmā |
evaṁrūpatayā śaktitritaya bṛṁhitasatatodayamānasaṁhriya-māṇānanta-saṁvidaikyaśālī. — p. 89

Thus the supreme Lord is Himself the Heart, in this way, strengthened by the three Energies (*parā-parāparā-aparā*) he is one with the infinite (forms of) consciousness which are ever arising and subsiding. — tr. different from J.S.

What Abhinavagupta expresses by this kind of summary of the preceding exegesis of the powers attained by the practice of awareness (*smaraṇa*) of the Heart (*mantra*) is (1) the non-duality of the Lord and the Heart-*mantra*, (2) the dynamism of the

śaktis in their rising and dissolving, in the case of the *yogī* passing through different phases. The non-duality is expressed also by stating that "even the worldly activity is a power which cannot be achieved without penetrating in that Heart" (*nahi etaddhṛdayānupraveśaṁ vinā vyāvahārikya api siddhiḥ*, p. 89).

By interpreting the section on the *siddhis* achieved by the power of the *mantra*, Abhinavagupta has traced the limited powers back to their unlimited source and purpose, the supreme I-consciousness of Bhairava (cf. p. 232). At the end of the *Parātrīśikā* (vv. 36-37) the "fruit" of the practice of the *bījamantra* is said to be omniscience (*sarvajñatvam*).

Erotic Symbolism

The question of the Devī in verse one was directed to achieving the *kaulikasiddhi*, "the perfection of totality," and Bhairava, in verse 4, promises in his answer to reveal that secret which bestows it, by declaring that the *kaulikavidhi* is present in the space of His Heart. In the second or *pratibimba* section of the Tantra, this *kaulikavidhi* has been revealed as the Heart-*mantra*, which is identical with the Deity, Bhairava Himself, or the Parā Śakti. This Heart is their union of essence (*sāmarasya*). How otherwise but by means of erotic images could this union be symbolised. The entire purport of the *Parātrīśikā* is precisely to enable the *yogī* or practitioner to participate or unite him/herself in this very union of Bhairava and Parā, embracing within them the entire cosmos. All this is symbolised in the "Seed of the Heart," the *mantra* SAUḤ. The *siddhi* consists then in this unification by means of the *mantra*, its *uccāra* and *smaraṇa* (both being technical terms of the *mantra* practice).

Kaula, kaulika, has certainly erotic implications, since the union of the two sexes is the most universal and powerful symbol for the integration of the opposites and complementarities. What in the visual arts, especially in temple sculpture, has been expressed in *sthūla* or material form, has been symbolised in linguistic terms in the Tantra. In both cases, layers of meaning have to be deciphered and the entire coded language needs to be interpreted. This is the task which Abhinavagupta has astonishingly accomplished.

The elements of the mantric symbolism have already been rendered clear in the *varṇaparāmarśa* or the theory of the phonematic manifestation (chapter 8),

especially when describing the vowels as *bīja* or "seeds," and the consonants as *yoni* or "womb," and as belonging to Śiva and Śakti respectively. Further sexual symbolism is implied in the terms *bindu* and *visarga* with their multiple connotations. The triangle (*trikoṇa*), which among other things represents the vowel *e*, implies not only the entire Trika metaphysics, and on the physical plane, also the downward-facing shape of the *yoni*. Here again, the integration of the two triangles of Śiva and Śakti in the *ṣaṭkoṇa* or hexagram, has an erotic component, and it is an essential central part of many *yantra*s or *maṇḍala*s.

Thus the entire erotic symbolism should not be surprising or misleading, it has to be seen precisely in the context of Trika and Kaula spirituality and metaphysics.[22]

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22. Cf. the parallel in temple sculpture and its interpretation, for instance in the temples most often associated with so-called "erotic images" or *mithuna*: Khajurāho in Madhya Pradesh and Koṇārka in Orissa. Cf. Devangana Desai, *The Religious Imagery of Khajuraho*, Mumbai (Project for Indian Cultural Studies) 1996; *Koṇārka: Chariot of the Sun-God*, Photography Oki Morihiro, Text by Bettina Bäumer and M.A. Konishi, New Delhi (D.K. Printworld) 2007.

10

Transcending Ritual

adṛṣṭamaṇḍalo 'pi . . . — v. 18

Even without having seen
the ritual *maṇḍala* . . .

ACCORDING to Alexis Sanderson "the true character of the text (*Parātrīśikā*) is instruction in the worship of, and meditation on, the *mantra* of the Trika's Parā,"[1] and he describes the *Parātrīśikā* as "a short text teaching a form of the Trika known as the *Anuttara, Ekavīra*, or *Parākrama*, in which a simplified, essentialising form of worship and meditation is directed to *Parā* alone and her seed-syllable *Sauḥ*."[2] In the previous chapter we have dealt with this seed syllable and its esoteric analysis. Now the last part of the Tantra is precisely devoted to the worship or ritual connected with it. In the predominantly non-dualist Tantras such as *Mālinīvijayottara*,[3] *Svacchanda, Netra, Vijñāna Bhairava* and *Parātrīśikā*, external ritual is relativised, spiritualised, and substituted by internal ritual or meditation, but ritual still remains the paradigm for spiritual practice.[4] Thus even in the non-dualist spirituality of *Anuttara Trika*, ritual is not excluded but sublimated. As Sanderson remarks, "the expanded consciousness which is the Absolute of the Śaiva left did not exclude the plurality (*bhedaḥ*) and sequence (*kramaḥ*) of action. For it was defined as that which projects itself as this plural and sequential reality

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1. A. Sanderson, "The Śaiva Exegesis of Kashmir", p. 379.
2. Ibid.
3. Which, according to Sanderson, is not purely non-dualist, cf. "The Doctrine of the *Malinivijayottaratantra*".
4. Cf. for this subject A. Sanderson, *Meaning in Tantric Ritual*, New Delhi (rpt: Tantra Foundation), 2006.

while retaining the non-duality and timeless simultaneity of the consciousness which is its inner ground."[5] Thus in the context of supreme non-dualism (*paramādvaita*) "transcending ritual" does not mean negating it, but attaining a level of consciousness where the ritual acts are transformed into divinised states of life itself. There is an interesting parallelism between the last section of the *Parātrīśikā* (vv. 19-36) and the last section of the *Vijñāna Bhairava* (vv. 143-53), although the way of dealing with ritual differs. The *Vijñāna Bhairava* substitutes spiritual states for the ritual, whereas the *Parātrīśikā* retains some of the ritual components.

Abhinavagupta and his commentator Jayaratha quote the *Parātrīśikā* precisely when it is a question of transcending ritual.[6] Now the most important Śaiva ritual is initiation (*dīkṣā*)[7] which gives access to both powers and liberation. The uninitiated who do not follow a spiritual path are called *paśus*, "animals,"[8] even in Trika. It is only *dīkṣā* which empowers the aspirant to practise the regular or occasional worship. The Advaita Śaivas could not avoid this necessity, but they could transform, substitute and thereby transcend it. In one such context where Abhinavagupta quotes the *Parātrīśikā* in the *Tantrāloka* he says succinctly: "Gnosis alone is initiation, as enunciated in the Śrītrīśikā." (*TĀ* XV.15). And Jayaratha adds the quotation from the *Parātrīśikā* (vv. 25 and 19). In the *Tantrāloka* Abhinavagupta states more generally about the relation to ritual:

> Worship is considered to be the offering of all things in non-differentiated unity. . . .
>
> The state of perfect fullness which is obtained by worship, recitation, meditation, sacrifice, vows and other practices, is called absorption (*samādhi*) by the ancient masters.
>
> There (i.e. in this tradition) in relation to worship, recitation and other practices, whether externally or internally, there is no prescription or prohibition at all.

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5. Ibid., p. 48.

6. Cf. *TĀ* IV.50 quoting *PT* v. 26, Jayaratha quotes verses 18 and 20; XII.16 quoting *PT* v. 20; XV.15 quoting *PT* v. 25.

7. Cf. for the general Siddhānta *dīkṣā*: *Somaśambhupaddhati*, ed. and tr. Hélène Brunner, Pondicherry (IFI), 1963 ff.

8. Cf. for example *Kiraṇāgama* I.15.

> There the purification of imagination or the rites of twilight have no usefulness.
>
> It is said in the *Śrītrikasūtra* (*Parātrīśikā*) extensively, such as "the one who does not know the ritual prescription he becomes a knower of sacrifice." — *TĀ* XII.13-16ab[9]

The Kashmir Series edition has at the end of the preceding group of verses (9-18) the beginning of the section under discussion (18c): *adṛṣṭamaṇḍalo 'pyevam.*[10] Abhinavagupta starts giving a different interpretation (cf. p. 233) which he concludes by a quotation (source unknown) which connects *darśana* or direct experience with *parā*, the supreme Śakti, *smaraṇa* or memory with *parāparā*, the transcendent-immanent Śakti, and *vikalpa* or thought with *aparā*, the immanent Śakti (p. 234). "Memory" may be a hint to the practice of the *bījamantra* (*smaraṇa* in verse 12).

Clearly marking a transition to the next section of the Tantra Abhinavagupta introduces verse 19 by: "It has been said, "Trika is higher than *Kula*." Now, of (the schools of) Trika the highest is *Anuttara* (Trika). It is this which (the Tantra) is going to describe" (Skt. p. 90, tr. 236).

> *adṛṣṭamaṇḍalo 'pyevaṁ*
> *yaḥ kaścidvetti tattvataḥ*
> *sa siddhibhāg bhaven nityaṁ*
> *sa yogī sa ca dīkṣitaḥ* ॥ 19 ॥

> Whoever thus knows truly (the *bījamantra sauḥ*), even if he has not seen the *maṇḍala*,[11] he enjoys the success of perfection eternally. He is (perfect) *yogī*, he is (really) initiated. — p. 236

Abhinavagupta gives three interpretations of *maṇḍala*:

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9. Not a literal quotation of verse 20, as clarified by Jayaratha:
śrītrikasūtra iti trikaprameyasūcikāyāṁ śrīparātrīśikāyāmityarthaḥ ।
tathā ca tatra avidhijño vidhānajño jāyate yajanaṁ prati ityādi yaduktam ॥

10. Not in the edition by R. Gnoli.

11. The phrase *adṛṣṭamaṇḍalo 'pi* is found frequently in other works stressing the freedom from ritual. Cf. e.g. *Tantrasāra* 20, p. 186.

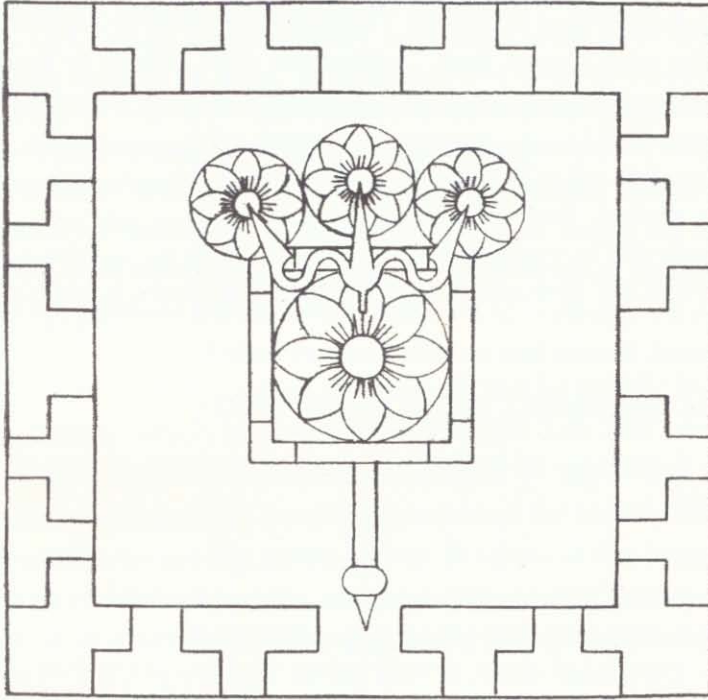
> *Maṇḍala* means a mystic circle (diagram) in which the deity is installed. *Adṛṣṭa* means one who has not seen or one who has not joined the association of *yoginīs* (*aprāptamelako 'pi*) by means of *caryā* or observance of certain religious rites through *śakti* process (*śāktopāya*) or *niśāṭana*, i.e. a religious rite practised at night [through *āṇava* process or *haṭhapāka*, i.e. a persistent process of assimilating experience to the consciousness of the experient classed under *śāmbhava* process].
>
> Another explanation of *maṇḍala* may be the system of nerves as medium of prāṇic currents and a smaller group of nerves.
>
> So *adṛṣṭamaṇḍalaḥ* according to this interpretation of *maṇḍala* would mean "one who has not perceived the group of nerves, etc. by means of yogic practice."
>
> It may be interpreted as not even having seen the diagram of the trident with lotuses. In the matter of realisation, *maṇḍala* or the ceremony of initiation is of no use. — pp. 236-38

However, the person who is qualified in this way is only one "who has been favoured by the highest descent of grace (*paraśaktipātagṛhītaḥ*), *vetti* means he alone knows. This realisation alone is *dīkṣā*, what else is *dīkṣā* (initiation)? Knowing in this way, he is truly initiated by the all-pervading Lord Bhairava." If the condition of *śaktipāta* is fulfilled, the usual rules concerning *mantras* are not applicable:

> The statement that "The man with little intelligence who adopts a *mantra* by himself (without the help of a *guru*) gets into trouble" applies only to *mantras* other than this central seminal *mantra*, not to this *mantra*, viz. *sauḥ bīja, for it is the very heart of Bhairava*. [emphasis added]. This *mantra* transcends even such deities as *Mantra*, *Mantreśvara*.
>
> This cannot be expressed in a book. It is the very core of the Divine. It has (already) been clearly laid down that this is truly acquired only by the favour of the highest grace. So "anyone" suggests that anyone can acquire it irrespective of caste, religious vow, *caryā*, etc.; insight into it is the main point.
>
> That *yogī* enjoys full perfection. Since a *yogī* is one who yearns after communion with the Divine, initiation characterised by the gift of spiritual insight (*jñāna-dāna*) and the destruction of *māyā* (*māyā-kṣapaṇa*) is imparted to him alone. The particle *ca* has been used in the sense

of certainty. Therefore he should be wholly considered a *yogī*. That is why it is said, "He alone is the *yogī* who has attained full perfection. He alone is ever initiated." — p. 238[12]

Abhinavagupta is not interested in going into details of the *maṇḍala*s which he describes in the context of initiation in the *Tantrāloka* and *Tantrasāra*.[13] The intention of the Tantra was certainly the *maṇḍala* drawn at the time of initiation, but the other, external and internal, meanings are equally relevant.



The Outline of the Maṇḍala of the Trident and Lotuses (*triśūlābjamaṇḍalam*) prescribed by *MVT* 9.6-31

12. The traditional etymology of *dīkṣā* derives it from the two roots *dāna* (giving) and *kṣapaṇa* (destroying): *dīyate jñānam, kṣīyate pāpam,* "it bestows knowledge and destroys sin."

13. *TĀ* XV. Cf. A. Sanderson, "Maṇḍala and Āgamic Identity in the Trika of Kashmir" for details. Cf. *TĀ* XXXI, the whole *āhnika* on *maṇḍala*, according to various Tantras, the main symbolic elements of which are the trident and the lotus (*triśūlābja*)

Knowledge Substitutes Ritual

In the very first question the Devī proposes pure gnosis for achieving the perfection of the totality: *yena vijñātamātreṇa*, "by merely knowing this," referring to *Anuttaram* (v. 1). The Tantra is consistent by coming back to the same expression:

> *anena jñātamātreṇa*
> *jñāyate sarvaśaktibhiḥ* I — 20ab

corresponding to *yaḥ kaścidvetti tattvataḥ* in verse 19, and *evaṁ yo vetti tattvena* in verse 26 (he who knows thus in reality). These phrases remind one of the Upaniṣadic *ya evaṁ veda*, "he who knows thus," where the *evam* relates to correspondences discovered by introspection in the Self and in the cosmos.[14] Invariably the result of this knowledge is "becoming what one has known" (*sa eva bhavati*). The *evaṁvid* is not one who knows objectively, but one who knows *thus*, i.e. meaning the mode of knowing, not the object. In the Tantra the *anena* is related to *Anuttara* (v. 1), and to the *mantra* which is its own nature or symbol, *svarūpa* (vv. 20, 26). Thus the connection with the question of the Devī is established towards the end, when the Heart and the seed *mantra* has already been revealed.

> *anena jñātamātreṇa jñāyate sarvaśaktibhiḥ* I
>
> By mere knowledge of this (Heart, *mantra*) (the *yogī*) is known by all the Śaktis.
>
> *Vivaraṇa*:
> He is known by all the deities and by all the omniscient powers. By mere knowledge of this (*mantra*) he knows whatever is known by this very knowledge alone, as said before. The use of the instrumental "by all the *śaktis*" denotes the instrument.

Abhinavagupta is very brief here, but the implication of the instrumental is significant, because knowledge which is mystical and transformative, is both active (*jñātamātreṇa*) and passive (*jñāyate*). This instrumental also expresses the recognition, not *of* but *by* the Divine energies who, being omniscient, bestow omniscience to the *yogī* (cf. vv. 36-37). The passivity of the mystical knowledge is also expressed in the second half of verse 20:

14. A frequent phrase in the Upaniṣads.

śākinīkulasāmānyo
bhaved yogaṁ vināpi hi || 20 ||

Even without *yoga* he becomes equal to the family of *Śākinīs*.
— p. 239

Abhinavagupta ingeniously interprets the term *sāmānya* in the superior sense of *sāmānya spanda* or generic/universal vibration:

> Merely by having an insight in this *mantra*, without the practice of *yoga* which brings about identity with the Divine after the end of this body formed by *māyā*, the aspirant not only becomes equal to the family of *Śākinīs* — but becomes even superior to them, for the group of *Śākinīs* has only *viśeṣa spanda* (particular *spanda*) (which only leads to behaviour and intercourse characterised by differentiation), whereas he (the aspirant) becomes identified with *sāmānya spanda* or universal pulsation of the Divine, with the energy of the unsurpassed *akula* (*sāmānya spandarūpo akularūpaḥ*) and becomes the master of the group of *śaktis*. — p. 239

Abhinavagupta takes *kula* not only in the sense of "family group," but as the "cosmic body," or the totality which is transcended by *akula*, *kula* also meaning Śakti and *akula* Śiva or *Anuttara*.[15] "Without the practice of *yoga*" is a parallel to the overcoming of ritual, since both involve the action of the individual (*nara*), whereas here it is the *śaktis* who are the active agents. In terms of the *upāyas*, this *yogī* is at the level of *śākta* which is *jñānopāya*, and where the individual (*aṇu*) is in a passive role — hence *jñāyate sarvaśaktibhiḥ* is eminently fitting to the way of Energy.

avidhijño vidhānajño
jāyate yajanaṁ prati || 21 ||[16]

Even if he is ignorant of the injunctions pertaining to rituals, he acquires the knowledge of the injunctions concerning sacrifice (by himself).

Vivaraṇa:

Vidhi means both knowledge (*jñānam*) (of the injunctions pertaining to religious ceremonies) and its practical application (*kriyā*). He who

15. See before, cf. art. *kula* in *Tāntrikābhidhānakośa* vol. II, pp. 120-22.

16. Only half verse. In Gnoli's edition v. 20.

has not got these two is a mere animal. As has been said in *Kiraṇāgama*: "He who is engaged only in thinking of the means of (sensuous) enjoyment (*bhogopāyavicintakaḥ*) is always a mere formless animal, ignorant, incapable of doing anything, having no qualities, wanting in power, diffusive (*vyāpī*), confined only within *māyā*, and steeped in her interior." — I.15[17]

Even such an animal by mere insight into this *mantra* becomes a *vidhānajña* of sacrifice. *Vidhānajña* is one who has both knowledge of the injunctions and their practical application (*vidhānaṁ jñaca yasya saḥ*), i.e. he is both a knower and performer of the ceremony appropriate to a certain religious obligation (*viṣayasaṁgata karaṇam prati kartā jñātā ca*).

Though the sacrifice that he performs may not be formally perfect, yet it becomes perfect *for this Heart is all-inclusive.*

— J.S., pp. 240-41, amended, emphasis mine

(*yajanaṁ ca asyāpūryamapipūrṇaṁ bhavatīti-sarvamayatvāt hṛdayasya*, p. 91).

The Tantra returns to an encoded description of the *hṛdayabīja* SAUḤ:

kālāgnim āditaḥ kṛtvā
māyāntaṁ brahmadehagam ।
śivo viśvādyanantāntaḥ
paraṁ śaktitrayaṁ mataṁ ॥ 22 ॥

Beginning from *kālāgni*, i.e. the earth right up to *māyā* [thirty-one *tattvas*] rest in *brahma*-body. Śiva [i.e. *anāśrita* Śiva with Śakti] rests in *an+anta+antaḥ*, i.e. in *visarga* (coming) at the end of *a*, i.e. *aḥ*. In the remaining (*para*), i.e. *au* beginning from *śuddha-vidyā* (*viśvādi*), rest the three Śaktis [*śakti-traya*, i.e. *śakti-triśūla* — *Sadāśiva, Īśvara*, and *Śuddha-vidyā* of the nature of *icchā, jñāna* and *kriyā*]. This Śakti-*triśūla* is acknowledged as the Supreme (*tacca paraṁ matam*) or Creative force (*visargamaya*). — p. 241

The above verse seems to reiterate the universal all-embracing nature of SAUḤ, passing through all the *tattvas* and containing them as in abbreviated form. The following two verses refer to this seed by beginning with *tat* (vv. 23-24).

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17. Cf. *TĀ* IX.145-46.

tadantarvarti yatkiñcit
śuddhamārge vyavasthitam |
aṇurviśuddhaṁ acirāt
aiśvaraṁ jñānam aśnute || 23 ||

Whatever exists is established in that (*mantra*), all that is reposing in the pure path. The limited individual attains without delay (immediately) the pure knowledge of the Divine.

— p. 242, modified

Vivaraṇa:

Whatever is established in a variegated way, i.e. in *bhedābheda* and *bheda* in the universe, all that reposes in the central seminal *mantra sauḥ* in a pure state, i.e. in a state of undifferentiated unity. *Aṇu* is (1) one who breathes or (2) one who experiences and utters in a limited way. Even he (after the realisation of *sauḥ*) becomes topmost of living beings (*mūrdhanyo bhavan*) and obtains by the influence of this *mantra* (*tatprabhāvāt*) the Divine knowledge very soon. — p. 243

Summarising again the *bījamantra* and its effects, the next verse is the only one on the *guru* — literally *codaka* (from the root *cud*) means the one who impels, who inspires, who directs one speedily on the path.

taccodakaḥ śivojñeyaḥ
sarvajñaḥ parameśvaraḥ |
sarvago nirmalaḥ svacchas
tṛptaḥ svāyatanaḥ śuciḥ || 24 ||

(The first line has two senses):

(1) The *guru* who inspires to know [the secret of] that [*amṛta-bīja*] should be considered as Śiva.

(2) It should be known that He who inspires to know this *mantra* is Śiva. He is unknown to others but He is Himself omniscient, Supreme Lord. He is omnipresent, spotless, pure, fully satisfied, abiding in His own essential nature, unsullied.

Vivaraṇa:

The *guru* or spiritual director who inspires this *mantra* to realise should be understood to be Śiva Himself. It is Śiva alone who inspires it.

> He is beyond comprehension, for he is the (eternal) subject (and cannot be reduced to an object). *Svāyatana* is one who (while abiding in his essential nature) emanates his own (*sva*) *ayas*, i.e. the existence or objects in the form of consciousness. — p. 243

The non-dual identity of *guru* and Śiva is such that all the Divine qualities become qualities of the *guru*, and these can be used even as criteria to identify the true master. It is significant that this verse comes almost at the end of the Tantra, although it is the *guru*, or *Parameśvara* as *guru*, who initiates and bestows the power or *kaulikasiddhi*.

As the Seed of the Banyan Tree . . .

The entire Tantra teaches the seed *mantra* or *hṛdayabīja* SAUḤ, but the term *bīja* occurs only at the end (vv. 25, 34, 35), where it assumes its full force. One of the most powerful symbols or metaphors of the text is that of the seed of the *nyagrodha* (banyan) tree.

> *yathā nyagrodhabījasthaḥ*
> *śaktirūpo mahādrumaḥ* |
> *tathā hṛdayabījasthaṁ*
> *jagadetaccarācaram* || 25 ||

> As the great banyan tree lies in the form of potency in its seed, even so this universe with all the mobile and immobile beings lies in the seminal *mantra* (*sauḥ*), the very Heart (of the Supreme). — p. 244

The third point of comparison is *śakti*: the potency of the seed producing the mighty tree on the one side, the power of the one-syllabled *mantra* on the other, which is the Divine Energy, the Heart.[18]

> *evaṁ yo vetti tattvena*
> *tasya nirvāṇagāminī* |
> *dīkṣā bhavatyasaṁdigdhā*
> *tilājyāhutivarjitā* || 26 ||

> He who knows this *mantra* in its essence, becomes competent for

18. Cf. Kṣemarāja, *Parāpraveśikā*, *maṅgalaśloka*, where *Parā Śakti* is called *hṛdayaṁ parameśituḥ*, "the Heart of the Supreme Lord." This text quotes the present verse of the PT with a brief comment.

initiation leading to *nirvāṇa* (liberation) undoubtedly, without any formal ceremony consisting of oblation (*āhuti*) with sesamum indicum (*tila*) and ghee (melted butter). — p. 244

The simile affords Abhinavagupta the occasion to prove the all-inclusiveness of Reality, *sarvaṁ sarvātmakam* (here in terms of *viśvaṁ viśvātmakam*).[19]

Vivaraṇa:

It has already been said that there is nothing in this world which is simply non-existent. Everything (in its place) is all-inclusive. Just as in the seed of the banyan tree lie all the relevant parts, viz. sprout, branches, leaves and fruits, even so this universe lies in the heart of the Supreme. The certain conviction of this is (in itself) undoubted initiation for liberation (*nirvāṇa*). As has been said:

This is the acquisition of ambrosia leading to immortality; this alone is the realisation of Self. This alone is the initiation of liberation (*nirvāṇa-dīkṣā*) leading to identity with Śiva. (*SpK* II.7)

There are other kinds of initiation also which may offer worldly enjoyments, but the insight into this (*mantra*) is the essential initiation. That is why it (Trika-Śāstra) is superior to every other Śāstra; it is even superior to *Kulaśāstra*. — p. 244

Abhinavagupta uses once more an image from daily life: the balance. The comparison with the *tattva*s seems to imply the limitations of measures and categories of space, time, etc.

As in the weights of a balance, though there may be only a limited removal of the weight there arises a good deal of difference in the measure of a thing only by slightly raising or lowering the balance, even so there occurs a good deal of difference in respect of the knowledge of space, time, and enjoyment of the higher and higher *tattva*s (categories of existence). It is even possible that the sphere of experience (*saṁvedana*) rising higher and higher may exceed the thirty-six categories. Since insight (*saṁvedana*) into the *hṛdaya-bīja* or

19. Another common symbol found in the Tantras to express the potency of everything contained in the Divine is the egg of the peacock, *mayūrāṇḍa*, which contains potentially all the colours and forms of the peacock.

sauḥ is initiation (*dīkṣā*), therefore is it said that *vīra* and *yoginī* who have penetrated this insight (*etat saṁvit anupraviṣṭo*) stand initiated (*kṛtadīkṣan*) by the grace of the I-consciousness described as revered, supreme Bhairava who is the ruler of the collective whole (*cakreśvara*) of the twelve external and internal sense-divinities (*raśmi-devatā-dvādaśaka*)[20] that are constantly present (*satatodita*) in the supreme reality (*para-sattā*) and are transcendent to *māyā* (*amāyīya*). 25-26

— p. 244-45

Nirvāṇadīkṣā is, in the Śaivāgamas, the highest initiation (after *samaya, putraka, sādhaka*) which normally leads to immediate liberation.[21] According to Abhinavagupta the purpose of the *Parātrīśikā* is liberation-in-life, *jīvanmukti*, and the understanding of *nirvāṇadīkṣā* as immediately leading to the death of the initiate would not agree with this. There may be a difference in the expression *nirvāṇagāminī*, "leading to," hence not directly followed by death. Now this *dīkṣā* is attained by *saṁvedana*, variously translated by "experience," "insight," also "perception, feeling, awareness," it is the active correspondent to *saṁvit*, hence "active consciousness." *Bīja* occurs again at the end in verse 35 where it becomes the object of meditation (*dhyāyet*):

ādyantarahitaṁ bījam
vikasat tithimadhyagam |
hṛtpadmāntargataṁ dhyāyet
somāṁśaṁ nityam abhyaset || 35 ||

The *yogī* must meditate on this *bīja* which has neither beginning nor end, which has expanded into fifteen vowels (*vikasat tithimadhyagam*) and which resides in the heart-lotus.[22] He should also practise the lunar part (*somāṁśam*, i.e. view all objects of the world as nothing but the manifestation of *sauḥ*).

— p. 262

This cryptic verse has several interpretations, depending on the level of consciousness. Abhinavagupta ascribes the meanings to two masters: Bhaṭṭa

20. Reference to the 12 *Kālīs* of the *Krama* system.

21. Cf. *TĀ* XIII.151-55; 234-35; XV.31-33; 460-63, etc. Cf. among others, *Ajitāgama*, ch. 77.

22. Cf. *VBh* v. 49: *hṛdyākāśe nilīnākṣaḥ padmasampuṭamadhyagaḥ* | *ananyacetāḥ subhage paraṁ saubhāgyam āpnuyāt* ||

Dhaneśvara Śarmā,[23] and his own *guru* (Śambhunātha). This verse is directed to the practical aspect of *bīja*, expressed by two verbs: *dhyāyet*, to meditate, and *abhyaset*, to practise. He first comments on the two lines:

ādyantarahitaṁ bījam

> This central seminal mantra (*hṛdayabīja* or *sauḥ*) is without beginning or end (1) for it does not require any extraneous light, i.e. it shines by its own light (*dīpakābhāvāt*), (2) for it is without variation, without coming in and going out (*gamāgama-śūnyatvāt*), and (3) for it is ever actively present (*satatoditatvāt*).

vikasat and *tithimadhyagam:*

> This [*mantra*], on the one hand, has expanded in the form of the external objective world and thus reached its complete manifestation. On the other hand, it inheres in the sixteen *tithis*, being their innermost essence. — p. 263

Then follows a first interpretation related to the *vīra-yoginī* union. On the question: "what sort of meditation is this?" he answers:

> *Somāṁśam nityam abhyaset* — *abhyaset* to be taken in the sense of *abhi+asyet*.
>
> The aspirant should cast the *somāṁśa*, i.e. *apāna* current (the current of inhalation) full of sixteen *tuṭis* from all sides (*abhitaḥ*) towards the male organ or the female organ. This means that the aspirant should project the *apāna* current of breath which is synonymous with full moon into *hṛtkarṇikā* upto *puṣpa*, i.e. the point of origin of the creative energy existing in each one at an inner distance of twelve fingers.
>
> Then after coming in contact with *amṛta* [i.e. *kuṇḍalinī-śakti*], in accordance with the inner vibration that is surging up, he acquires *kākacañcupuṭa-mudrā*.[24]
>
> Then the *apāna* current being withdrawn and expanding with the relish of the nectar of Śakti, excites the vibration within. The aspirant should make the *apāna* current fully developed by drinking in the nectar which is churned out by the vibratory force.

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23. Except for occasional quotations not much is known about him.

24. "The *mudrā* of the beak of a crow", cf. also *TĀ* III.168-69, and XXXII.47.

> After this, at the moment of the rise of the *prāṇa* (*sūrya kalā*), the exhalatory breath-current, resting in vowel-less *s* (vowel-less *s* of *sauḥ mantra*), he should continue his practice, supported by the experience of thrill, stoppage (of breath), an inner sensation of springing up, tears, tremor, etc. This is *śāktopāya* according to Bhaṭṭa Dhaneśvara Śarmā. — pp. 263-64, modified

Whatever is experienced by *vīra* and *yoginī* will be internalised by the *ekavīra* at the level of *śāktopāya*.

A still higher experience takes place at the level of *śāmbhavopāya*, the highest mystical states being described, in the context of the rise of *ūrdhva kuṇḍalinī*. Jaideva Singh translates the verse in this light as follows:

> The *hṛdayabīja* is without beginning or end. Of the *mantra 'sauḥ'* the *s*-part which betokens *prāṇa*, and *au*-part which betokens *apāna* being devoured, what remains is only the *visarga* (:) part. The actual nature (*svarūpa*) of this *visarga* is the seventeenth *bindu-kalā* which transcends the sixteenth *kalā* inherent in the fifteen *tithi*s each of the passage of *prāṇa* and *apāna*. This has to be realised only in the heart-lotus. One should always practise the repetition of *somāṁśa*, i.e. all the external objects like blue, etc. and internal mental contents like pleasure, etc. as *prameya* or objectivity. — p. 264

2. Explanation according to *śāmbhava upāya*:

> The *hṛdaya-bīja*, (i.e. *sauḥ*) without beginning or end is only *s*. Then together with the sixteen *tithi*s [i.e. *au* and *aḥ*], i.e. together with the sixteen-phased *apāna* current, the aspirant should project it by the contrivance of *grāsana* (dissolution) into the Heart. Just as in pouring water in a pipe there is at first movement with slow tempo (*calana*), then medium tempo (*kampana*), and finally fast tempo (*spandana*), so by the practice of slow, medium and fast tempo, he should penetrate (the cakras) *mūlādhāra, trikoṇa, bhadrakālī, kanda, hṛdaya* and *mukha*, i.e., *hṛt-karṇikā*. After this, simultaneously using slow, medium, and fast movement he reaches the culminating point at which there is a tremendous current owing to which both *prāṇa* (*sūrya*) and *apāna* (*soma*) become dissolved.
>
> From the point of view of succession of the phonemes, without the beginning and the next, i.e. without *s* and *au* of *hṛdaya bīja* (*ādyantābhyām*

etat-bījaṁ-mātṛkāpekṣayā aukāra-sakārābhyāṁ rahitaṁ) is meant the sixteenth *kalā*, viz. the *visarga*, . . .[25]

The aspirant rises even higher than this which is the seventeenth *kalā*, the commencement of *ūrdhvakuṇḍalinī*. He or she should always meditate on the *amṛta-aṁśa*, which is the sixteenth aspect, i.e. the *visarga-kalā* in the heart. This is what my *guru* (Śambhunātha) says.

[The mystic explanation of *somāṁśa* is the following:]

According to the etymological analysis — *saha umayā* (*vartate*), i.e. he who abides with Umā or Śakti, Soma means Śiva, for Śiva is constantly in union with goddess Parāśakti, and is in a state of *spanda* (*kṣobhena*) due to union which is indicative of the state of churning together of the two *tattvas*. *Aṁśa* in *somāṁśa* means that all objects, internal like pleasure and external like blue, are like organs of the organic whole who is Śiva, and who is perfect I-consciousness.

So the aspirant should practise the meditation over and over again with the *japa* of his senses both in an extroverted way in which he regards objective manifestation (*sṛṣṭi*) as Śiva and in an introverted way in which he regards the withdrawal of manifestation (*saṁhāra*) also as Śiva. This is the ever-present *hṛdaya-japa*. The potential mood has been used in the sense of possibility, competence.

— pp. 265-66, modified

There is a third interpretation given to this mystical verse (according to *āṇavopāya*, the individual way), in relation to the practice of *prāṇa*:

3. Explanation according to *āṇava upāya*:

Others, i.e. those who follow the *āṇava upāya* explain this Sūtra in the following way:

The starting point of breath is the heart, and the movement of *prāṇa* from that point up to *bāhya* (external) *dvādaśānta* measures up to thirty-six fingers. From that out, beginning with *prāṇa-vāyu* (*sūryatayā ullāsya*), the aspirant should restrain it at the point of *bāhya-dvādaśānta* for half a *tuṭi* (before beginning the movement of *apāna-vāyu*). Then after the rise of the movement of *apāna-vāyu* which is known as the *somakalā*, the imperishable, *amṛta*-like *visarga*, the aspirant should

25. Followed by different analyses of "without beginning and end" applied to SAUḤ.

> increase the *candrakalā* or in other words the *apāna kalā* at every *tuṭi* which measures two and a quarter fingers. Thus when fifteen *tuṭis* are completed, the *apāna vāyu* becomes *soma* or moon of sixteen digits at the point of *hṛtpadma* (the heart-lotus), i.e. the *antaḥ* (inner) *dvādaśānta*, for there has to be a pause of half a *tuṭi* there also. In this way, all told the passage of *apāna* current is complete at thirty-six fingers. (Pause of *ḥ tuṭi* at *bāhya-dvādaśānta*+15 *apāna-cāra* + pause of *ḥ tuṭi* at *antaḥdvādaśānta* totals to 16 *tuṭis*. Each *tuṭi* being of 2¼ fingers, the 16 *tuṭis* make 36 fingers).
>
> In such a state, "without beginning or end" only means that since the *parābīja* or *amṛtabīja* (*sauḥ*) is ever present at the first half *tuṭi* (on the occasion of pause at the *bāhya dvādaśānta*) and the last half *tuṭi* (on the occasion of pause at the *antaḥ dvādaśānta*), it cannot be limited by time. Therefore, it is without beginning or end.
>
> Leaving aside these two half *tuṭis*, the aspirant should practise the dissolution of the *kalās*, by meditating on the *somāṁśa*, i.e. on *visarga kalā* (*aḥ*) without *s* and *au* within the remaining *tuṭis*, separating it within himself in the form of the seventeenth *bindu-kalā*.
>
> — pp. 266-67

Concluding the multiple meanings Abhinavagupta makes a statement about the nature of the Tantra, called a *Sūtra*, and the possibilities of hermeneutics given to the commentator:

> All these three explanations should be considered to be appropriate. This verse is a *sūtra*. Therefore, by turning its words this way or that way, many kinds of explanation would become quite fit, as has been said that "a *sūtra* is that which gives scope for manifold senses." The respected teachers have averred that *Parātrīśikā* is an unsurpassable *sūtra*.[26] In this way, there can be many interpretations of the earlier verses also which are indeed like *sūtras*. — p. 267

A. Sanderson goes into the questions of "The non-duality of the factors of action and the interpretation of the stages of ritual" in his "Meaning in Tāntric Ritual" (pp. 48-62) in relation to the *Tantrāloka*, *Svacchanda* and *Netra Tantras* as interpreted

26. *Trīśikā cānuttarasūtram iti guruvaḥ* | p. 102. *Anuttarasūtra* should rather be taken to mean "*Sūtra* concerning the Unsurpassable," it is not an adjective to *sūtra*. There is a clear correspondence between the Tantra as *Anuttarasūtra* and the *Vivaraṇa* as *Anuttaraprakriyā*.

by Kṣemarāja. There he states the validity of ritual action even in a non-dualist context:

> To be made fit to participate in the cult of the deity or in non-dualistic terms, to be realised *as* the deity, so that the proper awareness of the worshipper should be that the Śiva worships Śiva with Śiva on Śiva, etc. Tāntric ritual can therefore be interpreted as presenting the initiate with a model of the Absolute which he is to realise as his true identity. — pp. 48-49

Details differ in the different texts, but the basic attitude is the same.

Supreme Worship

In an apparent contradiction to the declared transcendence of ritual by knowledge, the Tantra still describes a ritual process comprising *nyāsa* (imposition of *mantras* on parts of the body), *diśabandha* (fettering the directions), *āsana* (seat for the deity), and worship (*yajana, pūjā*), including fire sacrifice (*agnikārya*). Abhinavagupta, while introducing verses 27-33, provides a justification for accepting even external worship:

> Thus the way in which the transcendental (*anuttara*) state occurs without abandoning the external extension has been determined many a time both separately and in a composite way.
>
> Now this is what is to be said. In every Śāstra it is said:
>
> Having assumed a human body, those who worship the Heart, the essence of Trika, are the Supreme Lord in hidden form, even if they have not realised its full potential.[27]
>
> How is this worship to be performed? Even though this external worship is without its full virility, there must be in it the impact of the unsurpassable reality (*anuttara sattā*), for *anuttara* is after all *anuttara*. What is the operational method of this worship? In order to give a definite answer to this query, the author lays down the following verses: — p. 245

These verses describe some of the elements of ritual:

27. *manuṣyadehamāsthāya channāste parameśvarāḥ nirvīryamapi ye hārdam trikārthaṁ samupāsate.* — p. 94 (my translation).

mūrdhni vaktre ca hṛdaye
guhye mūrtau tathaiva ca ।
nyāsaṁ kṛtvā śikhāṁ baddhvā
saptaviṁśatimantritām ॥ 27 ॥

ekaikaṁ tu diśāṁ bandhaṁ
daśānām api yojayet ।
tālatrayaṁ purā dattvā
saśabdaṁ vighnaśāntaye ॥ 28 ॥

śikhāsaṁkhyābhijaptena
toyenābhyukṣayet tataḥ ।
puṣpādikaṁ kramāt sarvaṁ
liṅge vā sthaṇḍile 'tha vā ॥ 29 ॥

caturdaśābhijaptena
puṣpeṇāsanakalpanā ।
tatra sṛṣṭiṁ yajed vīraḥ
punarevāsanaṁ tataḥ ॥ 30 ॥

To summarise: *nyāsa* or the imposition of the hands on parts of the body with *mantra*s has the purpose to divinise the body to make it worthy to perform the worship of the deity (v. 27).[28] *Digbandha* or the fixing of the ten directions of space has the purpose of creating a sacred space free from obstacles (v. 28).[29] Creating a seat (*āsana*) for the deity with flowers and *mantra*s is the next act, on which the *vīra* or spiritual hero performs worship to the emission (*sṛṣṭi*, v. 30). After this procedure it is the Great Goddess (Maheśānī) who is worshipped.

sṛṣṭiṁ tu saṁpuṭīkṛtya
paścād yajanam ārabhet,
sarvatattva-susaṁpūrṇāṁ
sarvābharaṇa-bhūṣitām ॥ 31 ॥

yajed devīṁ maheśānīṁ
saptaviṁśati-mantritāṁ

---

28. Cf. the list of *mantras* in Jaideva Singh, pp. 246-47.

29. Cf. for the *mantras* applied: Jaideva Singh, p. 248.

tataḥ sugandhipuṣpaistu
yathāśaktyā samarcayet II 32 II

pūjayet parayā bhaktyā
ātmānaṁ ca nivedayet I
evaṁ yajanam ākhyātam
agnikārye 'pyayaṁ vidhiḥ II 33 II

After the *sampuṭīkaraṇa* of *sṛṣṭi*, one should start the *yajana*, i.e. the internal supreme worship. One should worship the Goddess Maheśānī who is fully equipped with all the *tattvas* or categories of existence, is decorated with all the ornaments and who is consecrated with (the previously described) twenty seven *mantras*. Then with fragrant flowers one should render the goddess due honour according to one's capability (*yathā śakti*).[30]

In this way, one should worship with supreme devotion and surrender completely to her. The internal worship has been described in this way. The same procedure should be followed in the matter of *agnikārya* or sacrificial libation to fire associated with this worship.
— p. 250

Abhinavagupta gives an esoteric interpretation of all the elements of ritual. He reconnects the *nyāsa* with the *tattvas* and phonemes.

The esoteric aspect of the limbs pertaining to *nyāsa*:

The *nyāsa* on the head, etc. is all right from the exoteric point of view. Really speaking, however, since they indicate *mantra*, these *mantras* are:

(1) indications of the five gross elements, viz. from ether down to earth which are said to be the external forms of the Supreme *Brahman*.

(2) the essence of Īśāna, Tatpuruṣa, Aghora, Vāmadeva, and Sadyojāta, the five faces of Bhairava.

(3) forms of *cit* (consciousness), *unmeṣa* in the sense of *ānanda* or bliss, *icchā* or will, *jñāna* or knowledge, *kriyā* or activity.

Their *mantras* are the following:

30. Alternative Interpretation: "together with the *yoginī*."

(1) *īśānamūrdhne,*

(2) *tatpuruṣa-vaktrāya*

(3) *aghorahṛdayāya*

(4) *vāmadeva-guhyāya,*

(5) *sadyojāta-mūrtaye.*

> Really speaking, there is no difference among the five (*etat pañcaka-avibhāgātmakatve*). Each of these is quintuple. Therefore, the number of the *mantras* is twenty-five. The *Mālinī mantra* (*napha hrīṁ*) and *Mātṛkā mantra* (*akṣa hrīṁ*) are both included within these twenty-five.
>
> *Śikhā-bandha* (tying the tuft of hair):
>
> There have become nine forms of the three goddesses, viz. *parā, parāparā,* and *aparā* because of each of them being connected with *icchā, jñāna* and *kriyā*. Each of them being associated with *sṛṣṭi, sthiti* and *saṁhāra* again becomes threefold. Thus their number becomes twenty-seven. All of them derive their nurture from *hṛdaya-bīja*.
>
> *Śikhā* symbolises the autonomy of the Divine diffused from Śiva up to the earth; its tying indicates identity, the quintessence of the non-differentiation of all. — pp. 251-52, modified

Both, in relation to tying the top-knot (*śikhā*) and the fixing of the directions, the term *bandhana*, "binding," is used, which Abhinavagupta interprets in a non-dualistic sense as interrelationships leading to or expressing unity (*bandhanaṁ — sarvāvibhāgasāraṁ tādātmyam*). This is again related to the principle of *sarvaṁ sarvātmakam*, i.e. that every part is related to the whole, applied also to the limbs of the body to be sanctified:

> Though the limbs, head, mouth, etc. have been indicated separately, yet each one of them is specifying the other. This fact has already been established by the principle: "Everything is the epitome of all" (*sarvaṁ sarvātmakaṁ*). — p. 252

He gives an indication to the worshipper to perform each detail of the ritual with an awareness of the totality, and to consider or meditate on each part of the body as containing the whole, i.e. divine body. Even the ten directions which are

symbolised by earthen jars filled with water placed in the directions are to be related to the Self of the worshipper. The removing of obstacles by three clappings of the hands is again given a spiritual significance:

> Three clappings:
>
> This should be done with three clappings. Clapping is symbolic of stability (*pratiṣṭhā*), i.e. being stable in Self. In clapping, the *hṛdayabīja* starting with *s* is the *mantra*, i.e. the first clapping should be done with the muttering of *s*, the second with the muttering of *au*, the third with the muttering of *aḥ*.
>
> The *mantra* should be a mere mumble, i.e. it should be uttered only indistinctly in *madhyamā vāṇī*. Inner *vimarśa* is the essence of sounding. That is accomplished in *madhyamā vāṇī*. It has been stated frequently that *vaikharī* or gross speech is only an appendage of *madhyamā vāṇī*, i.e. gross speech is only external manifestation of what is inwardly mumbled in *madhyamā*. — p. 253

And again, obstacles, the removal of which constitutes an important part of all rituals, are not to be considered as something outside consciousness:

> Pacification of obstacles:
>
> (In the esoteric sense), obstacles are the stain of waves of difference of which the essence is limitation and division in the Supreme Self (*paramātmani*) which is free of all difference and division. Their pacification connotes identification with the Bhairava-ocean in which there is no wave of difference or division.
>
> As has been said by venerable Somānanda:
>
> May Śiva who has entered into us as (the empirical) subject make obeisance by Himself to Śiva who is extended as the universe by means of *parā* who is His own Śakti in order to remove all obstacles which are but Himself. — *Śivadṛṣṭi* I, 1 (p. 253)

The consecration of water in the pots used for sprinkling on the image or symbol of worship is given a moving interpretation:

> Water in this context means everything that melts the heart because

> of non-restraint and non-hesitation (*toyam atra sarvameva hṛdayadravātmā — aniyantritatvāt asaṁkocadānācca*). — p. 96, ll. 13-14[31]

Regarding the *liṅga* or the symbol of Śiva he quotes the *Mālinīvijayottara* giving the "spiritual *liṅga*" (*ādhyātmikam liṅgam*):

> Do not worship the emblem of Śiva made of clay or stone or mineral or gem. Worship that spiritual emblem in which is absorbed the entire universe consisting of the mobile and immobile beings.
> — *MVT* XVIII, 2-3 (p. 253)

He further interprets *āsana* in relation to autonomy (*svātantrya*):

> *Āsana* (Seat):
>
> That is (*āsana*) which is determined by the agent through his autonomy, for when the aspect of universality is the main principle, then in the act of sitting, the location and seat are determined through autonomy only. — p. 254

The emission or creation (*sṛṣṭi*) to be worshipped is further interpreted as *varṇasṛṣṭi* or the emission of the phonemes from *a* to *kṣa*.

> It is the *hṛdaya* (*bīja* or the *mantra sauḥ*) which is identified with the phonemes from *a* to *kṣa*.
>
> That is the reason why the entire *āsana* is also covered with the same *mantra*, for the place of location (*ādhāra*) and that which is to be located are indissolubly connected.
>
> (What this means is that there is no difference between Śiva-*trikoṇa* and Śakti-*trikoṇa*. Śakti-*trikoṇa* is the *ādhāra* and Śiva-*trikoṇa* is the *ādheya*). — p. 254

The expression *samputīkaraṇa* of *sṛṣṭi* (v. 31) means the enclosing of a *mantra* from both sides, e.g. by the same *mantra*, in this case the *hṛdayabīja*:[32]

The *samputīkaraṇa of sṛṣṭi*

---

31. "Water" in the Tāntric or Kaula context can also denote wine.

32. According to Jaideva Singh, it is the *mantra ahaṁ* which is the *sampuṭa* enclosing the *mantra sauḥ* (note on p. 255).

1. From the point of view of esoteric worship of the Supreme:

> *Sṛṣṭi* here means the arising and subsiding of all the phonemes from *a* to *kṣa* severally and cumulatively in the Supreme principle through *hṛdaya-bīja*. *Saṁpuṭīkaraṇa* of *sṛṣṭi* implies that *saṁpuṭa* should be made by means of the mantra *sauḥ* at first of all the letters severally from *a* to *kṣa* and then cumulatively of all the letters. It has already been said that there cannot be *regressus ad infinitum* (*anavasthā*) in this matter. — p. 254

In the *Tantrasāra* Abhinavagupta quotes the *Parātrīśikā* (v. 30 *sṛṣṭiṁ tu saṁpuṭīkṛtya* . . . , p. 200) and gives the following comment on the elements of ritual:

> Having "uttered" (the *mantra* SAUḤ) perfectly and having made imposition (*nyāsa*) of the support and the supported he should perceive (*paśyet*) the universe in consciousness, since it (the universe) is nothing but consciousness (*saṁvinmayam*). Thus he encloses the universe by consciousness (*viśvasya saṁvidā tena ca tasyāḥ saṁpuṭībhāvo bhavati*), since the consciousness arises from and rests in the knowable (*vedya*). In this way the reality of Consciousness is obtained by two enclosures, as has been said: *sṛṣṭim tu saṁpuṭīkṛtya* . . .

He then relates the elements of worship like incense, flowers, etc. to the Self:

> Having offered perfume, incense, wine, flowers, etc. which are all conducive to penetrating into the Self, reposing in one's self and reciting (the *mantra*) silently, one should gather them and immerse them in water. — *Tantrasāra* 22 (pp. 200-01)

In a further spiritualisation of the *saṁpuṭīkaraṇa* of *sṛṣṭi*[33] this is taken as a meditation on the mutual penetration of the universe and (pure, divine) consciousness. There he adduces the verse from the *Parātrīśikā* as authority.

Abhinavagupta continues by giving an esoteric meaning to the description of the Goddess to be worshipped, where the question of meditation of or worship of particular forms of the Deities, their emblems and ornaments, is raised.

> *Sarvatattvaiḥ* . . . *pūrṇatvaṁ* — means that the supreme *Devī* is fully

33. Cf. for the *mantras* applied: Jaideva Singh, p. 248.

(*samyak*) and invariably (*anapāyitayā*) equipped with all the *tattvas*.

She is decorated with all the *ābharaṇa* (ornaments). This means —

1. (*Sarvābharaṇa = sarvatra ā-bharaṇam*)

   The Supreme Goddess is making everything in all directions (*sarvatra*), even in the atoms wholly (*samantāt*) her own (*ātmīkaraṇam*).

2. (*Sarvābharaṇa = sarvair-ā-bharaṇam*)

   It has already been explained that all external objects, such as jar, etc. all inner experiences, such as pleasure, etc. all experients such as animal, man, Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Rudra, Mantra, Sadāśiva are like congruous limbs (*avayava*) of the Supreme Goddess so that her being a uniform (*ekarasa*) organism (*avayavī*) is fully justified. That is why meditation on any definite form or weapon of hers has not been prescribed, for all this is (only artificial).

   (If it is not necessary to meditate on any definite form or weapon of the goddess), how can one desirous of mounting to the highest stage in spirituality, and desirous of following the path recommended by Trika achieve his object?

   If this is the question, the reply is: Who is constrained to mount? If there is any such being, let him not mount. Let him follow the process advocated by *siddha-tantra*, etc., let him resort to the narrow method of meditation, etc. prescribed according to their mode of thinking (*tadāśayenaiva nirūpita*). Such a person is not privileged to enter the stage of *anuttara* which is without any limitation or restriction. — pp. 255-56

The interpretation of *parā bhakti* (v. 33), supreme devotion, is given in the non-dualistic context, with three meanings:

> The word *parayā* implies that the worship has to be done with heart's devotion. How?
>
> (Three kinds of *bhakti*):

1. (*Bhakti* from the root *bhaj* meaning "to serve")

   By identifying oneself with *hṛdaya-bīja* or *sauḥ* (*tādātmya*) by entering into it (*anupraveśa*), and with a spirit of service or submissiveness (*prahvatātmatā*).

2. (*Bhakti* from the root *bhaj* meaning "to divide")

   Bhaktyā — with the self-contrived division of the worshipped and the worshipper. The one to be worshipped is (imaginatively) fashioned by oneself. The self-created object of worship has to be supreme, full of autonomy and consciousness for such is the power of the autonomy of *anuttara* (the Absolute). It cannot be insentient like a jar. That is the distinction of this system. It has been rightly said in *Īśvara-pratyabhijñā*:

   "The Lord, by His non-dualistic autonomy, having fashioned His own free self into *Īśvara* (Brahmā, Viṣṇu, etc.) causes the world to worship Himself through them." — I.5, 16

3. (*Bhakti* as *samāveśa* or compenetration):

   By *samāveśa* which is formally known as worship, one realises the Supreme Reality (*paraṁ tattvam lakṣyate*). The recognition of *samāveśa* in all forms of ritual observance (*sarva-kriyāsu*) is the best means (to the realisation of Supreme Reality), just as written letters are a means for the production and understanding of all empirical phonemes, and the empirical phonemes are a means of penetration into their energy. — pp. 256-57

The comparison given again from practical life is significant, because the forms of ritual are recognised as a means to union with the Supreme Reality, just as writing is a means to recognise the phonemes, and these are means to enter into their energy (p. 97 Skt.). This is another indication for Abhinavagupta's view that script (*lipi*) is the lowest form of the Word or language.

Every form of worship terminates by a gesture of surrender or prostration (*praṇāma*), which may be a mere formality or filled with meaning. Abhinavagupta explains the phrase *ātmānaṁ ca nivedayet*, "one should surrender oneself" by saying:

> *Ātmānaṁ nivedayet* means one should offer one's self, for there is

nothing else worth offering than this. The purport is that (according to the etymology of *nivedayet*: *niḥ* — completely, *vedayet* — one should experience or understand oneself) one should, in conformity to the Absolute Reality, consider one's Self to be the Absolute Reality itself. Here the potential mood (*liṅ*) in *nivedayet* has been used in the sense of possibility, for it has already been said that any stance connected with Self is always one of possibility. — p. 257

Yajanam (worship, sacrifice) has again been transposed into a non-dualistic meaning:

Yajana — homage:

The meaning of the expression *ākhyātaṁ* occurring in verse 33 is *ā-samantāt, sarvatra, sadā*, i.e. wholly, everywhere, always. *Khyātam* connotes the *khyāti* or realisation of the supreme, pure nature of Śiva. This is the true *yajana* or homage of the goddess *Parā saṁvit* (Supreme Consciousness). The root *yaja* in *yajam* connotes three meanings:

(1) *Yaja* in the sense of worship means: "Thus is her true worship."

(2) *Yaja* in the sense of *saṁgati* means: "This kind of worship offers the opportunity of appropriate meeting (*saṁyag-gamana*) of the worshipper and the worshipped, in other words the identity with the Supreme."

(3) *Yaj* in the sense "to make an offer, to donate" means the following: "This worship by removing the narrow, limited sense of I-consciousness of the empirical individual, denotes the sense of unification of the self with the perfect mass of Consciousness which is Śiva-Śakti." — pp. 257-58

The last sacrificial act is *agnikārya*, which receives a perfect spiritual interpretation by Abhinavagupta:

Agnikārya or oblation in the sacrificial fire:

svasvarūpaparijñānam mantro 'yaṁ pāramārthikaḥ |
dīkṣeyameṣa yāgaśca[34] *kriyāyāmapyanuttaraḥ* | — *Skt.* p. 98

34. Some Mss have *yogaḥ*, cf. R. Gnoli, p. 174 note 530a. He says rightly that *kriyāyām apyanuttaraḥ* would mean literally: "this is unsurpassed even in ritual action." He therefore opts for the emendation *kriyeyam*, "this ritual."

> This is the real oblation in the sacrificial fire, viz. the oblation, i.e. the inner burning of the residual traces of all desires in the mighty flame of Supreme Bhairava who is always ablaze with the *araṇi* of Supreme Śakti excited by union with Śiva, which is burning brightly with the eager consumption of all objects as its fuel, which is aglow with the abundant light of lubricous melted butter of worldly attachments. This alone is the real injunction regarding oblation right up to initiation. There is none other different from this. This is the real purport of it.
>
> Recognition of one's essential nature — this is the highest *mantra*. This is the real initiation. This is the real sacrifice. Among all the ceremonies, this is the highest rite. — p. 258

At the end of the esoteric interpretation of the ritual Abhinavagupta makes a statement which clearly distinguishes the *Parātrīśikā* from other Āgamas. The four sections (*pādas*) of an Āgama comprise *kriyā* (ritual), *caryā* (conduct of life), *jñāna* (philosophy) and *yoga*, implying a dualism of action and knowledge. In the *Parātrīśikā jñāna* comes first and *kriyā* last, but he indicates the *ekavākyatā* or consistency and interconnectedness of the whole text.

> It has been said earlier that just as in other scriptures, in the earlier part, ceremonies of worship with *mantra* are described, in the latter part the conclusion is made with *jñāna*, in the present Śāstra it is not so. What has been indicated in the *sūtra "uttarasyāpi anuttaraṁ"* has been carried out to the end in this work. Sacrifice, initiation, ceremonies, etc. are only aspects of *hṛdayabīja* and that is really *anuttara* (transcendent). — p. 258

The last sentence reads:

> *yaduktam uttarasyāpyanuttaram iti sūtre tadevaitadantena granthena nirvyūḍhaṁ — hṛdayasyaiva yāga-dīkṣākriyā-rūpatvāt tasya cānuttaratvāt* | — p. 98

The Fruit of the Practice

Every spiritual text ends with the declaration of the "fruit" of the practice concerned, *phalaśruti*, i.e. the result. This is related to the prayer of the Devī that she desires to

obtain complete satisfaction (*yena tr̥ptiṁ labhāmyaham*) by this knowledge (v. 2). At the end of the section on worship (*pūjāvidhi*) the Tantra declares:

> *kr̥tapūjāvidhiḥ saṁyak*
> *smaran bījaṁ prasiddhyati* || 34 ||[35]

> Rightly remembering/meditating/mentally dwelling on this seed (of the Heart) (the worshipper) attains complete perfection.

Abhinavagupta relates this perfection to *jīvanmukti*:

1. Thus ceaselessly even in worldly affairs, the aspirant who carries on worship, while remembering the *hr̥daya-bīja*, leaving aside other disciplines like *Kaulaśāstra*, Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava Śāstra, having entered into the essence, i.e. *hr̥daya-bīja* of revered Bhairava, making an outward display of object just for pastime, created by the blissful force of one's own *parāsaṁvit* (Supreme Consciousness), is verily liberated while alive. The use of the word *smaraṇa* (remembering) connotes the repetition of one's own experience, nothing else. In *Śrīmata-Śāstra* also the same idea has been expressed. — p. 259

His "definition" of *smaraṇa* shows his unique greatness as a spiritual master: *anubhava evāyamāvartate na tvanyat kiṁciditi smaraṇam ucyate* (pp. 98-99). The second meaning refers to the gradual process of *krama-pūjā*:

2. The worshipper who has not penetrated into the very heart of the energy of the great *mantra*, by rightly remembering the *hr̥daya-bīja* through the efficacy of *krama-pūjā*, having gradually attained to the power of the *mantra* as *hr̥daya-bīja*, also achieves the realisation of the highest perfection or the power of the *mantra* of *hr̥daya-bīja*, either through the gradual superiority of the efficacy of the *krama-pūjā* or by himself, or through the exhortation from the mouth of an appeased *guru* (spiritual director) and becomes liberated while alive. — p. 259

Relying on the authority of Somānanda, Abhinavagupta reiterates that external

35. Another half verse.

worship need not be excluded, but it is not necessary for the spiritual purpose. *atra dvāra-parivāragurupūjanaṁ guṇaṁ khaṇḍanāṁ vā na vahati* (p. 99): "here the worship of the doorkeepers (of the temple), of the subsidiary deities and of the *guru* is neither an advantage nor a disadvantage."

Before taking up the summary verses of this section we may consider the last two verses of the Tantra which are concerned with the fruit of the *mantra* and of the entire text:

> *yān yān kāmayate kāmāṁs*
> *tānstāñ chhīghram avāpnuyāt* ।
> *asmāt pratyakṣatām eti*
> *sarvajñatvaṁ na saṁśayaḥ* ॥ 36 ॥

> The *yogī* obtains immediately whatever objects he desires. Therefore, omniscience becomes as direct to him as perception. There is no doubt about this.

> *Vivaraṇa*:

> Thus the *yogī* becomes full of endeavour, perseverance, eagerness, and zeal through firmness of will brought about by the potency of the omnifarious *sauḥ mantra* (*sarvamaya hṛdaya-vīrya-samucchalita-icchā prasara*) and so by repetition of the continuous state of practice (*tat sthiti-rūḍhi-rūpa-abhyāsāt*), he acquires so much power that he obtains immediately whatever he desires. In short, in this very physical body, he acquires omniscience that is characteristic of the Supreme Bhairava. — p. 268

Abhinavagupta introduces the concluding verse (37) by stating the essence of the state attained through the Tantra:

> After examining from all points of view, the book is now being concluded. In the end, the progress of the *yogī* terminates in the attainment of this transcendental state (*akula-sattā-asādane*) which means resting in one's essential Self; this alone is the state of Bhairava. This has been mentioned repeatedly. Now this is the concluding verse. — p. 269

The *Parātrīśikā* concludes:

evaṁ mantra-phalāvāptir ity
etad rudrayāmalam ।
etad abhyāsataḥ siddhiḥ
sarvajñatvam avāpyate ॥ 37 ॥

[Translated literally:]

> Such is the attainment of the fruit of the *mantra*,
> this is the union of *Rudra* and *Rudrā*.
> By this practice the perfection of omniscience is attained

In the translation of Jaideva Singh:

> Such is the gain from the practice of this *mantra* (viz. *hṛdayabīja* or *sauḥ*). This betokens the union (*yāmala*) of *Rudra* and *Rudrā* or Śiva and Śakti. By the continuous practice of this is acquired the supernormal power of omniscience. — p. 269

Abhinavagupta concludes the *Vivaraṇa* at two levels: that of gnosis or meditative reflection (*prasaṁkhyāna*), and *yoga*, related to *abhyāsa* (practice)

> In this way, the fruit of all *mantras*, even of the *mantras* with the phonemes of the other Śāstras also, is obtained, not otherwise. The word *iti* connotes conclusion.
>
> In conclusion, it is said that this connotes the union of *Rudra* and *Rudrā* (*Rudrayāmala*) i.e. of Śiva and Śakti where there is no division of question and answer, which is the state of awareness of the essential Self (*svarūpa-āmarśana*).
>
> Beginning from a consideration of this up to the external state in which there are infinite, innumerable cases of manifestation and absorption . . . all this is indeed summarised in *akula* or *anuttara*, the transcendental Reality. This is the conclusion (of the dialogue between Bhairava and Devī) from the point of view of intuitive gnosis (*prasaṁkhyāna*).
>
> "From the practice of this accrues the power of omniscience" — this is the conclusion from the point of view of *yoga*.
>
> This (i.e. *Rudrayāmala* state) is ever-present in everybody. May there be good to all! (*iti śivam*). — pp. 269-70

The Heart, the Resting Place of All

Significantly, the last group of summary verses (*saṁkṣepārtha*) of the entire *Vivaraṇa* is devoted to the Heart in its different aspects and meanings. The concluding verses are more an extended colophon with autobiographical content. This shows the central place accorded to this symbol by Abhinavagupta, but in harmony with the Tantra (see the list of occurrences p. 114). If *hṛdaya* is literally the core — of the text, of the whole of Reality, of the Divine — *Anuttara* is the all-encompassing Reality itself.

These verses are so significant that I venture a new translation.

That in which the entire universe shines,
and which shines everywhere,
that is the one and unique resplendence
which is the Supreme Heart, O wise. (1)

Just as a jenny or a mare
simultaneously expanding and contracting her generative organ
rejoices in her heart,[36]
in the same way one should meditate
on the Heart, of the nature of creation,
in the innermost Heart in the central vein (*suṣumnā*),
full of great bliss of both (Śiva and Śakti). (2-3)

That in which, whether meditating
remembering, reflecting or acting,
everything finds repose,
and whence it emerges in manifestation:
that is the Heart. (4)[37]

It is there where the one supreme knowledge
(and also) the determinate knowledge (arise),
where the levels of reality, the various worlds,
and the subjects, from Śiva to the bonded soul, (5)

finding their respective true own-nature, the ultimate one,
becoming manifold and shine,

36. A strange simile, derived from an unknown Tantric source, also quoted in *TĀ* V.58 b-59a.

37. *dhyāyan-smaran-vimṛśan-kurvanvā yatra kutracit, viśrāntimeti yasmācca prollaseddhṛdayaṁ tu tat.*
— p. 99

manifesting even the wonderful Supreme Consciousness. (6)

The worship of this (Heart) is ever present,
it is attained everywhere, in any country, with any substance,
in any activity, location or knowledge
certain beyond doubt. (7)

But the gradual process of worship (*krama-pūjā*)
is to be performed according to the Kula
on auspicious days, with the sacred thread (*pavitraka*).[38]
In the Trika tradition it is called "correctness" of worship. (8)

As has been said:

As among liquid substances is semen,
among phonemes the "seed of creation,"
among traditions is Trikaśāstra,
among states of liberation is the (attainment of the) state of Bhairava, (9)

among ways of meditation is the state of absorption,
among vows the practice of the *vīra*s (spiritual heroes),
in the same way, among auspicious occasions
the Kula *parvan*s (excel all) according to this tradition.[39] (10)
. . .

While summarising the entire subject matter Abhinavagupta mentions the two ways of attaining *Anuttara*: through gnosis or intuitive insight (*prasaṁkhyāna*) which lies beyond only practice, and *yoga* which leads to supernatural powers (*siddhi*s). He stresses again that for both ways it is only grace (*śaktipāta*) of different degrees that brings about the final result.

> Thus the nature of *anuttara* (transcendental reality) has been described in detail. In it, there is no room for contemplation (*bhāvanā*). In it

38. *Pavitraka* is an important ritual in which a thread with various knots, a ring of *kuśa* grass or made with other substances, is worshipped and offered Cf. *TĀ* XXVIII.112-86, *pavitrakavidhiḥ*.

39. Cf. *Tantrasāra* 20, pp. 183-86. Cf. A. Padoux, "On the Parvan Rites According to Abhinavagupta's Tantrāloka", in : *Sāmarasya*, pp. 49-55.

> only gnosis (*prasaṁkhyānam*) functions as the bearer of mountains fit for the burden of means (*upāya-dhaurya-dharādharāṇi dhatte*) up to the end of firm realisation of Self identified with *hṛdaya-bīja* which is characterised by steadfast spiritual delight.
>
> Now the yoga for those who are desirous of attaining supernormal power (for show) has to be described. Though the supernormal powers pertaining to *dṛṣṭayoga* are possible only by means of the autonomy of the Absolute and they are beyond the sphere of popularly known and determinate laws, yet they cannot (wholly) transgress the divinely fixed order, "yet the means for the supernormal powers pertaining to multiple goals has to be described with respect," as said by Somānanda in *Śivadṛṣṭi*.
>
> Even in the matter of yoga for the display of supernormal powers (*dṛṣṭa-yoga*), there is no violation of the transcendental nature, for like the effort to attain the supernormal powers for display, their actual attainment, and the cessation of all efforts in their maturity — everything is due to the grace of the Supreme. But in comparison to liberation in life, such an attainment would be said to be due to faint grace of the divine, for it does not lead to perfection.
>
> — p. 261

Prasaṁkhyāna corresponds to the *yena vijñātamātreṇa* (by the knowledge of which alone) of the question of the Devī in verse one. It is an important term related to spiritual knowledge. S. Vasudeva remarks that it appears already in Kālidāsa "as a synonym of contemplation."[40] He further quotes Vācaspati's *Nyāyavārttikatātparyaṭīkā* as defining: "*Prasaṁkhyāna* is the knowledge of truth arising from trance (*samādhi*)."[41] There he adduces the *Vivaraṇa* passage quoted above.

In summing up it may be said that, although the Tantra adheres to ritual procedure, Abhinavagupta takes every aspect of worship and interprets it with a non-dualistic meaning. He, however, interprets the stages of ritual action, such as *agnikārya* or fire sacrifice, as stages of spiritual experience. While distinguishing between external (*bāhya*) ritual and its esoteric meaning, the latter is described as

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40. In *Kumārasambhava* 3.40.

41. S. Vasudeva, The Yoga . . . , p. 225: *prasa khyāna samādhija ṁ j ñānaṁ.*

the "true" (*vāstava*) or "non-artificial" (*akalpita*) worship, which ultimately leads to recognition of the true Self (*svasvarūpa-pratyabhijñā*). What Abhinavagupta does is, as Sanderson calls it, a "translation" of ritual into metaphysics,[42] and this "translation" again employs the methods of Sanskrit grammar and *nirvacana*. An important link in this transference from external acts of worship to their internal meaning is *parā bhakti* mentioned by the *Parātrīśikā*. This supreme devotion or surrender could easily be understood in an advaitic sense,[43] "because it is a means of recognition of the identical nature in all actions (of ritual)."[44] In this transformative interpretation ritual becomes a key to self-recognition.

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42. Cf. A. Sanderson, *Meaning in Tantric Ritual*, pp. 50-53.
43. Cf. for the relationship of *bhakti* and Advaita: *Śivastotrāvalī* of Utpaladeva, Exposition by Swami Lakshman Joo, introduction by Bettina Bäumer, esp. pp. 5-15.
44. *sarvakriyāsvevaṁrūpatāpratyabhijñānamupāyatvāt* | — p. 97 (tr. different from J.S.).

Conclusion

sarvaṁ sarvātmakam

Everything is connected to the Whole

I. Abhinavagupta's Personal Conclusion

HAVING concluded his commentary with a reference to the double meaning of *Rudrayāmala*, Abhinavagupta appends a lengthy colophon (20 verses) which presents what exegetes would call the "Sitz-im-Leben" — the living context in which he had composed this extraordinary text. Characteristically, he combines the most personal statements regarding his family, his *guru*s and disciples, with the most universal themes contained in the text. Even more than in the benedictory verses or *maṅgala* he states clearly his spiritual purpose. He is conscious of the inadequacy of language to convey the Divine reality (*śrīśāmbhavam matamanargalitātra vācaḥ*, v. 2b). His motivation in composing the text is clearly aimed at the spiritual well-being of humanity.

> Thus being born of Cukhulaka, resident of Kashmir, I, a black bee at the lotus-feet of Maheśvara, intent on lifting up mankind looking up to me (for spiritual succour), have written this commentary pregnant with the deliberation of the mystery of Trika. (1)
>
> Who can estimate emphatically that so much only is the doctrine pertaining to Śiva? There is no bar to words in this matter. All that which is within my comprehension appears here regarding the Universal Spirit (*akhilātmani*). Therefore, the wise should not be averse to it. (2)
>
> This is a work of such nature that it makes firm the knowledge of the ignorant, of one who is full of doubts or of one who has contrary views. In the case of those in whom conviction has already started,

in whom it is fully grown (*rūḍhasya*), it makes the settled conviction of their heart harmonise with the teaching. (3)

What is singular with Abhinavagupta's autobiographical texts is that he not only praises his masters,[1] but also the disciples and their high spiritual and intellectual qualities in a lively and loving way.[2] So we know for whom he has composed his texts and in what circumstances. But writing for his close disciples does not mean excluding humanity at large, they rather offer the occasion for the master to reveal the meaning for the spiritual well-being of all.

etatpriyahitakaraṇaprarūḍhahṛdayena yanmayā racitam |
mārgadarśanaṁ tat sarvasya śivāptaye bhūyāt || 9 ||

The following are the names of the disciples to whom the work is addressed:

In Kashmir, there was the chief minister of the king, Yaśaskara. He was named Vallabhācārya. He was a brāhmaṇa of the most excellent lineage. His son, Śauri, is worthy of renown on account of his good qualities and is like the ocean in dedication to the feet of the crescent-crested Śiva, is the abode of virtue, one who fully deserves the great fame that has spread about him, is a pleasant object of affection and who has an inborn tendency towards compassion on all people.

His life-companion (wife) is named Vatsalikā. Because of the abounding devotion to her husband, her mind is filled with an inner disposition towards spiritual matters and expands with delight by the worship of Śiva. (4-5)

He has a son, named Karṇa, who is a brāhmaṇa who very well understands the mystery of the manifestation and maintenance of the world, who delights in the meditation and reflection on and worship of Śiva, who even in childhood and youth, abandoning attachment to objects of senses, has resorted to unwavering reflection which eradicates transmigratory existence. (6)

My own brother, by name Manoratha Gupta, having a longing for the Supreme Self, is engrossed in the Śaiva Śāstras; in order to

1. Cf. A. Sanderson, "A Commentary . . .", in *Sāmarasya*, pp. 122-34, on Abhinavagupta's *gurus*.
2. Cf. the concluding verses of the *Tantrāloka* (37 end).

> destroy transmigratory existence, he is eager to examine the entire range of Śāstras and Tantras for attaining the supreme state of Śiva. (7)
>
> There is also another person, Rāmadeva by name, who is devoted to Śaiva Śāstra, who is well-versed in grammar (*pada*), Mīmāṁsā (*vākya*) and Nyāya (*pramāṇa*), and who brings about veritable adornment to his birth in the highest caste (i.e. brāhmaṇa). (8)
>
> May that which I have written with heart full for the good and delight of all these serve as a guide for all for the attainment of (the nature of) Śiva. (9) — pp. 270-71 (modified)

He then mentions his own descent:

> Atrigupta who was born in an excellent family in Antarvedi (the land between Gaṅgā and Yamunā) came to (settle down in) Kashmir the borders of which were hallowed by innumerable sages who were the incarnation of moon-crested Śiva. (10)
>
> In his great lineage was born Varāhagupta whose son was Cukhula by name who was averse to worldly affairs and whose heart was set on Śiva alone. (11)
>
> From him who had examined and understood the entire lot of categories and principles did Abhinavagupta obtain the human body sanctified by the Supreme Lord. (Even in this embodied condition), having attained full freedom from fear and doubt, he has instilled into the heart of his pupils the secret lore of Trika. (12)

He has some ironical remarks about people of little understanding:

> To those who are devoid of right judgement, I can only make a bow. There are others who deliberate but are unable to reach a successful conclusion. One can but pity these senseless people. There may be someone else, though only one among a *lakh* (a hundred thousand) who has become steady in mind after having attained the quintessence of deep deliberation. The above may bring my effort to a successful issue. (13)
>
> Any earnest request to those who are lazy in discerning their Self will not bear any fruit other than harrying oneself. There are those of unsteady mind who only make a fuss regarding the discernment of the universe. I only bow my head in respect to appease them. (14)

In an interesting parallel to the present-day situation where false *gurus* are deluding their confused disciples, Abhinavagupta describes a similar condition in his own time. Not only regarding other people, but he himself was as well disappointed by false teachers.

> There are dull-witted people who are confused themselves and throw the senseless multitude of creatures into confusion. Having bound them fast with fetters, they bring them under their subjection by influencing them with tall talk of their qualities. Having thus seen creatures who are simply carriers of the burden of *gurus* and their (blind) followers, I have prepared a trident of wisdom[3] in order to cut asunder their bondage. (15)
>
> I was also thrown into confusion by many who presumed to be teachers of truth by declaring "that (Brahma or Śiva) am I" but whose tongue had not even contacted the two words "that" and "thou" (*tat tvam varṇayugamapi*).[4] (16)

Only one verse is dedicated to his *guru*, Śambhunātha[5]:

> The Lord has set in motion the heart of the *guru* with compassion for lifting up those who have taken refuge (at his feet). That glorious *guru* Śambhunātha has set me[6] on the path of truth. (17)

The next one relates to Somānanda as the author of the earlier commentary (*Vivṛti*), not as his *guru*, though his predecessor in the lineage.

> I have written this work after (fully) reflecting on the doctrine of Somānanda which has spontaneously entered my heart which shares that pure state of truth taught by my *guru*. (18)

The last two verses are addressed to the goddesses who have inspired him in writing and who have appointed him as *guru*, for whose grace he prays. These goddesses

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3. *jñānatriśūla*: the trident as symbol of Trika, and as a weapon of Śiva for destroying bondage and ignorance. In v. 19 again the term *jñānaśūla* occurs.
4. *tattvamapi* seems to refer to the *mahāvākya tattvam asi* (you are That) of the Upaniṣads.
5. Strangely Jaideva Singh omits his name in the translation.
6. *niyuktavāṁstattve*: *niyukta* can be taken in its several meanings: attached to, directed, placed or fixed on, appointed, ordered; implying both, his connection with truth and his being commissioned by his *guru* to pass it on.

may be the same who are called "the divinities of one's own consciousness" (*svasaṁvittidevībhir eva . . . dīkṣitaḥ*) by Jayaratha,[7] who initiate the spontaneously enlightened *guru* without ritual. They may be also identical with the Śaktis who recognise the *yogī* who has received this supreme knowledge (*PT* v. 20 *jñāyate sarvaśaktibhiḥ*).

> O goddesses full of streams of ardent delight rushing forth lavishly from you as you move about freely in the *cakra* of my heart and who dwell on the upper sharp edge of the trident of wisdom[8] that is proficient in cutting asunder crores of my fetters, my mind, speech and body free of the reawakening of the fear of migratory existence are already surrendered at your feet. May you, therefore, confer your favour on me exceedingly and quickly, and dwell in my heart as Grace abounding. (19)
>
> O goddesses, having your beautiful and ingenious continued existence in the centre of my heart (*tatcakra*), assigning the position of a *guru*, it is you who have employed me in the act of exposition of this text. Therefore forgive this fickleness of my speech and mind. (20)

The final colophon reads:

> In nineteen hundred (verses) this *Parātrīśikā* has been explained. This will cut asunder the knots of doubts in all the Trika Śāstra. This has been written by Abhinavagupta.

1900 refers most probably to the extent at 1900 *śloka*s; since one *śloka* comprises 32 syllables, it would amount to 60,800 syllables for the entire text. The purpose of a commentary, as is often stated, is to "dissolve the knots (in the understanding of) the text" (*granthagranthīnirdalanārtha*).[9]

II. General Conclusion

Since Abhinavagupta calls the Tantra a *Sūtra*, which can have an infinite number of meanings, it is time to gather the threads which are spread out (root *tan*) in Tantra and *Vivaraṇa*, and in the present hermeneutical work. It is a difficult task, considering the depth and complexity of the two texts.

7. On *Tantrāloka* IV.50.

8. Reference to the *maṇḍala* with the three Śaktis on the spikes of the *triśūla*.

9. Here: *trikaśāstreṣu granthīnirdalayiṣyati*.

One of the great gifts of Abhinavagupta is that in the midst, or at the end, of a complex exegesis and elaboration, he always comes back to a simplified, universalised summary statement, often in verse form, when he wants to compress the meaning obtained. In this way he does not allow the reader to get lost in subtleties, but brings him back to the essential. Whenever he is carried away by an argument he stops himself from the digression (*alaṁ . . .*).

One way of concluding is to look at the internal coherence of a text and its commentary, what is called *ekavākyatā*: literally, the text says only one thing from beginning to end. This one word is *anuttara*, the unsurpassed/unsurpassable, but the Tantra immediately adds: *uttarasyāpy anuttaram* (v. 3), because *anuttara* should not be understood as excluding *uttara*, or as transcending it in a way to leave it behind.[10] By frequently coming back to this *sūtra* along his commentary, Abhinavagupta time and again asserts the integration of the whole of Reality with the Absolute, or of the *idam* and the *ahaṁ*.

Starting off as a dialogue, the Tantra first accepts the duality of Bhairava and Devī, in the role of *guru* and disciple, and Abhinavagupta goes to a great length to avoid any dualistic interpretation and to show the unity of Consciousness. But Consciousness, in Trika and *Pratyabhijñā*, is a dynamic, not a static reality, and this dynamism includes *prakāśa* and *vimarśa*, Light and its Reflection, which means also, at the level of person, relationship. At the very end (v. 37) the Tantra asserts that the entire revelation culminates in *Rudrayāmala*, i.e. the union of Śiva and Śakti, or *Rudra* and *Rudrā*.[11] Abhinavagupta adds that this union (*saṁghaṭṭa*, the term has erotic connotations) implies no division in question and answer, because it flows from the awareness of the true essential nature (*svarūpāmarśana prasarāt*). Thus the entire text — Tantra and *Vivaraṇa* — is contained in this process of moving from duality to non-duality. "Process" is what one of the titles of the text says: *prakriyā* or, in the words of the *Tantra*, *vidhi*. *Anuttaraprakriyā* is therefore

10. Cf. R. Panikkar, "The Experiential Argument of Abhinavagupta", where he says: "Many systems of thought (a certain Vedānta, for instance) in their urge to go always beyond, leave Reality behind," p. 499. When using the capital for Reality, it is the totality of the *tattvas* or cosmotheandric levels which is meant.

11. With the double meaning of the *Rudrayāmala Tantra* of which *Parātrīśikā* is supposed to be a part.

not a statement about Absolute Reality, but a way (*upāya*) of realising it, recognising it in a non-dual insight (*pratyabhijñā*), and therefore, a way to liberation-in-life. The connection with life and living experience is never cut asunder, especially by the *Vivaraṇa*, where Abhinavagupta brings even the most esoteric speculations back to lived experience — hence he calls the tradition *anubhavasampradāya*.

Philosophically, Abhinavagupta applies terms of *Pratyabhijñā* in the interpretation of the Tantra (what Sanderson would call "overcoding"), thereby achieving coherence. Apart from the conceptual pair *prakāśa-vimarśa* the concept of reflection or *bimba-pratibimba* is used, precisely to show the interconnection between *Anuttara* and *uttara*, or the Absolute and its reflection in the cosmotheandric Reality. Both conceptual pairs enclose between them the dynamic unity of Consciousness which does not exclude plurality or multiplicity.

This multiplicity consists of a system of hierarchically ordered levels of Reality or categories, *tattvas*, taken from the Śaivāgama cosmology. The system of the *tattvas*, which is so pervasive in Indian cosmology, should not be misunderstood as a "primitive" view of the world, which does not agree with modern science, it has to be understood as a symbolic and holistic view including all the levels of Reality in a continuum: from the material to the elements of the human (the senses and internal organs, including the ego) up to the Divine, where Śakti and Śiva are not the transcendent Absolute but are still categories in the realm of objective reality. Beyond them is *Paramaśiva* or *Anuttara*, who cannot be counted among the 36 *tattvas*. I have therefore chosen the term "cosmotheandric" for these interconnections between the three domains of Reality. But in the *paramādvaita* of Trika hierarchies have no intrinsic value, and they are subverted, including the social hierarchies of caste, etc.

The most pervasive philosophical principle which Abhinavagupta uses in all contexts, "from Śiva down to Earth," is *sarvaṁ sarvātmakam*, variously translated as "everything is related to the totality," "every part is related to the whole," "omnifariousness" (Jaideva Singh), "omnipresence of all in all" (A. Padoux), "everything is of the nature of all," etc. This doctrine has ancient antecedents,[12] with very different connotations, especially in Sāṁkhya. In non-dualist Śaivism

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12. Cf. the articles by A. Wezler, who traces its earliest occurrence to the Mahābhāṣya of Pāṇini (second century BCE). See Bibliography.

the doctrine assumes theological and mystical dimensions, starting from the founder of the philosophy, Somānanda, the precursor of Abhinavagupta in the interpretation of the *Parātrīśikā*. Summarising his view of the doctrine of the all-inclusiveness of Śiva, R. Torella writes: "In this universe where everything is penetrated by Śiva nothing remains in the margins, all is mirrored even in the humblest thing and the whole nature of Śiva is present in it."[13] Abhinavagupta not only espouses and applies the dictum, he goes as well into an extensive exegesis of a verse from the *Mahābhārata*: *yasmin sarvaṁ yataḥ sarvaṁ* . . . which exemplifies this omni-pervasiveness.[14]

This hermeneutical principle is one that is applicable to the correspondences between phonemes and levels of Reality. Far from creating a chaotic concoction, there obtains a systematic way of interrelationships, with a strong foundation in language in all its aspects. There is no space for a serious comparison with other systems and traditions, but it would be worthwhile to juxtapose the *sarvātmakatva* with the Buddhist *pratītyasamutpāda*. Apart from its relationship to causality, which is missing in *sarvaṁ sarvātmakam*, because there is no earlier or later, what is common is the insight into the total interconnectedness of all things. Certainly, Abhinavagupta's Śaiva version of the doctrine is strongly theistic, because everything is connected to, is contained in everything precisely because all things are a reflection of or contained in Śiva.

An interesting philosophical outcome of both *Anuttara* and *sarvaṁ sarvātmakam* is the apparent tautology, which Abhinavagupta expresses once without hesitation: The reality of *Anuttara* must be present even in a worship that does not have the full intensity — "because *Anuttara* is after all *Anuttara*" (*tathā 'pi cānuttarasattayā atrāpi bhāvyam — anuttaratvādeva*, p. 94). This has both a philosophical and a spiritual implication. If nothing is outside *Anuttara* and apart from *sarvam*, the tautology is only a necessary statement of the same reality, however, each time qualified by an aspect of manifestation.[15]

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13. R. Torella, The *Īśvarapratyabhijñā Kārikā*, p. XV, A summary of Śivadṛṣṭi III.18 b: *svaniṣṭhe śivatā deve pṛthivyādau apīdṛśam*.

14. Another important point of difference between the *Vivaraṇa* and *Laghuvṛtti*, because the latter does not refer to *sarvātmakatva* at all.

15. Cf. the importance of Tautology in Western Philosophy, e.g. Wittgenstein.

Spiritually the implication is, as Somānanda expresses it in the very beginning of his *Śivadṛṣṭi*, that no obstacle, no disturbing thought (*vikalpa*), no negative experience, is outside the Divine Reality, Śiva — that would entail dualism. Therefore the *Vijñāna Bhairava* and Somānanda give examples of painful or sorrowful experiences which still hold the potential of expanding consciousness.[16] This insight has far-reaching spiritual consequences.

Many scholars translate *Śivādvayavāda* as "monistic Śaivism," but I do not incline to have the term "monistic" as applied to the system of Trika and Pratyabhijñā. First of all, it is *paramādvaita*, or "supreme non-dualism," which does not exclude any reality, even duality. Monism would suggest a uniform reality without any room for plurality and relationships. What we have seen is that precisely Trika, and the related systems like Kaula and Krama, neither exclude manifestation (the *idam*), nor the dynamism of the inner-Trika relationships. The dynamic relationship of Śiva and Śakti, philosophically *prakāśa-vimarśa*, can never be described in terms of monism, but of non-dualism.

If *sarvaṁ sarvātmakam* is a hermeneutical key running through the whole *Vivaraṇa* — without having any direct root in the Tantra — the other pervasive hermeneutical scheme is that of the four levels of *Vāc*: *parā, paśyantī, madhyamā, vaikharī*. They are all in one, levels of Consciousness, levels of Speech or the Word, and levels of manifestation of the Divine. This conception, too, is not derived from the Tantra directly but from other sources (such as Bhartṛhari), but it offers a vast and comprehensive scheme of interpretation. Since the primary method of Abhinavagupta, specifically in the *Vivaraṇa*, is a linguistic–grammatical one, and the largest part of the text is engaged with meditations and speculations on aspects of language, this fourfold scheme finds encompassing expression. Aside from Tāntric exegesis, it has a much wider significance for any philosophy or theology of language. Apart from the *Tantrāloka* which contains many complementary and parallel passages, and the *Mālinīvijayavārttika*, anyone dealing with philosophy of language and, specifically, theory of *mantra*, has to refer to the *Vivaraṇa* for its depth and clarity. The basis certainly lies in the Āgamas which approach reality in either of these two ways: through cosmology (or cosmotheandrism, the *tattvas*), and through language or *mantra*.

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16. Cf. *VBh* v. 118, also 101, 111, 112; cf. also *SpKā* I.22, etc.

Each Āgama or Tantra teaches one central *mantra,* which, so to say, encapsulates the entire revelation. The centrality of the seed *mantra* SAUḤ and its comprehensive hermeneutics is one of the great contributions of Tantra and *Vivaraṇa*. It is called *hṛdayabīja,* "seed of the Heart," and *sṛṣṭibīja,* "seed of creation," and each term receives an extensive elaboration. The symbol of the seed is both, linguistic and organic (*yathā nyagrodhabījastha . . .*). But the central concept and symbol is the Heart in all its dimensions and connotations.[17] The multiple meanings are simultaneously present and it depends on the level of experience which one is predominant. In any case, "it is this Heart which is present everywhere, which shines spontaneously, and whose nature can be mainly realised by intuitive awareness."[18]

Spiritually, it is "by dissolving (depression and doubt) in an instant, when the stain of the limitations of bondage is removed, one enters the Heart of Bhairava."[19] The Heart is then the seed-*mantra* itself (SAUḤ) which is the *svarūpa* or own-form[20] of *Parā* and *Anuttara* in non-dual union. Now, *Parā* or *Anuttarā,* "the feminine Absolute," is defined by Jayaratha (on *Tantrāloka* III.66) as "the (Goddess) who is filled with the wonder of unsurpassable sovereignty and freedom."[21] She is the Goddess Consciousness Herself, *Anuttarā saṁvid,* who, together with Bhairava in non-dual union (*yāmala*) has the nature of full I-consciousness.[22] *AHAṂ,* the *mantra* of I-consciousness,[23] the other core concept of the *Vivaraṇa,* is the encompassing reality, enclosing within it the totality of all the phonemes (from *a* to *ha* and *anusvāra*) and *tattvas* (p. 182). *AHAṂ* is the power underlying all *mantras,* hence *mantravīrya.*

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17. Cf. P. Muller-Ortega, *The Triadic Heart of Śiva,* based on the *Laghuvṛtti.*

18. *tadeva hṛdayaṁ, sarvatrātra sakṛdvibhātam prasaṁkhyānagamyaṁ rūpaṁ mukhyataḥ* ।
— p. 80

19. Skt. p. 83.

20. *Svarūpa* means that in which the symbol and the symbolised coincide.

21. *niratiśayasvātantraiśvaryacamatkāramayī.*

22. For the different traditions associated with *Parā,* her iconography, etc. I refer to A. Sanderson, "The visualisation of the Deities of the Trika".

23. *tasya (J. yāmalasya) pratyavamarśo yaḥ paripūrṇo 'hamātmakaḥ* । — *TĀ* III.235ab.

Abhinavagupta concludes that "really speaking, the highest truth of all kinds of knowledge is I-consciousness" (p. 183).[24]

By identifying the *bījamantra* with the Heart and with supreme I-consciousness, Abhinavagupta achieves a universalisation of the most intimate and secret *mantra*. This is one of his specific contributions in the hermeneutics of the Tantra. The theme of the relationship between secrecy and universality is especially important in the present-day context. The *Parātrīśikā* "extracts" the seed *mantra* or *hṛdayabīja* in coded language which, traditionally, would be revealed only by the *guru* in initiation. Abhinavagupta is the master, not only of his direct disciples, but also of his readers today, who lifts that veil and makes the secret accessible. The actual practice of the *mantra* is reserved to those who are initiated in the tradition. But at the same time, Abhinavagupta makes an effort at universalising the teaching of the Tantra. What is then the position of a present-day reader in relation to the secrecy, and to what extent can he or she participate and profit from the great insights of the Tantra? All along the *Vivaraṇa* Abhinavagupta provides hints at the spiritual conditions and requirements in order to gain access to this hidden treasure. As he elaborates in the commentary to the *sūtra*: *etad guhyaṁ mahāguhyam* (v. 3), the secret or mystery is at the same time an open truth, because total secrecy would contradict revelation.

We may now ask what is Abhinavagupta's original contribution to the hermeneutics of the Tantra? It is certain that he has carried the interpretation of the very first word of the *Parātrīśikā*, *Anuttara*, to its utmost possible implications. Although the concept is not new, as it has also an important place in the Buddhist Tantras, it is Abhinavagupta who has developed it, especially in relation to its complement, *uttara*.[25]

Another original interpretation, though of course based on the earlier Tantras, is his developing of the reflection and inversion, or *bimba-pratibimba*, of *varṇas* and *tattvas*, phonemes and levels of reality. Finally, his hermeneutical thrust lies always in leading everything, multiplicity at all levels, back to *advaya saṁvid*, to

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24. *Sarvāṇyeva ca saṁvedanāni vastuto 'hamiti paramārthāni vimarśamayānyeva*, — p. 68.

25. Here the *Vivaraṇa* is clearly in contrast to the *Laghuvṛtti*, where *Anuttara* receives only a brief treatment.

non-dual consciousness, what A. Padoux calls his "emanationist non-dualism" (*Vāc*, p. 231). We find a wonderful expression for the ingenious combination and unity between Āgama (revelation), reasoning (*yukti*) and spiritual experience, so characteristic of the author's approach: After quoting from Somānanda's *Śivadṛṣṭi* he summarises the point thus: *ityādi etadāgamasarvasva prāṇatayaiva yuktiyuktyā hṛdayaṁgamīkṛtam* (p. 63), in Jaideva Singh's translation: "This treasure of Āgama has been accepted on account of its reasonableness as one's very life" (p. 169), or alternatively: "Because this treasure of the Āgama is the very life itself, it has been absorbed in the heart by fitting methods of reasoning." All the elements are present here in a balanced way, and therein lies the unique greatness of his method.

Given Abhinavagupta's universalistic approach, e.g. with reference to language and consciousness, it would be tempting to attempt a comparison with similar themes in other traditions, e.g. the Kabbala mysticism of language or the *Logos* of St. John's prologue and its mystical and theological exegesis in Christianity.[26] But this remains outside the scope of the present work. However, in spite of the difficult and often esoteric nature of the *Vivaraṇa*, this text has a great potential for philosophy of language on the one hand, and for spirituality on the other. The task of the interpreter is then also to extract these themes which do have a universal meaning.

Many aspects of the *Vivaraṇa* could not be dealt with in the present discourse, as for instance, the relation of the cosmic spheres (*aṇḍa*) with the *tattva*s and phonemes, as derived from the Āgamas. The purpose of the present work has been primarily to bring out the essential themes, giving examples of specific and central topics of the hermeneutics of Abhinavagupta, in order to render such a difficult text accessible. After all, the purpose of the text is *saṁvido vimarśanam* (p. 4), "reflective awareness on Consciousness," and Abhinavagupta reminds us time and again that this has to be done in a personal way and by spiritual practice.

I am conscious of the shortcoming of my venture, because, as Abhinavagupta himself confesses, words are hardly adequate in expressing the mystery of *Anuttara*. However, there is a consoling simile which he uses in the *Mālinīvijayavārttika*:

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26. Cf. a brief attempt: B. Bäumer, "Logos and Mantra: Language Human and Divine", in: *Co-worker for your Joy*, Delhi (Vidyajyoti College), 2006, pp. 37-44.

> Even a small amount of water on the ground is invariably drunk up by the rays of the sun, and through rain flows again into the ocean. [In the same way] all knowledge and action in this world merges, either directly on its own, or gradually through other [stages] into the ocean of Śiva.[27]
>
> — *MVV* I.382

Ultimately everything, as also my humble endeavour at understanding, merges into the great ocean of Śiva, whose shores I have only touched — hoping that one day I will get merged in it.

27. Tr. J. Hanneder, *Abhinavagupta's Philosophy of Revelation*, p. 121.

Appendix I

Verses of the Parātrīśikā

अथ

श्रीपरात्रीशिकाग्रन्थः

Variants from the edition by R. Gnoli (G.)

श्रीदेवी उवाच

अनुत्तरं कथं देव सद्यः कौलिकसिद्धिदम्।
येन विज्ञातमात्रेण खेचरीसमतां व्रजेत्॥१॥

एतद्गुह्यं महागुह्यं कथयस्व मम प्रभो।[1]
हृदयस्था तु या शक्तिः कौलिकी कुलनायिका।
तां मे कथय देवेश येन तृप्तिं लभाम्यहम्॥२॥

श्री भैरव उवाच

शृणु देवि महाभागे उत्तरस्याप्यनुत्तरम्॥३॥

कौलिकोऽयं विधिर्देवि[2] मम हृद्वययोम्न्यवस्थितः।
कथयामि सुरेशानि[3] सद्यः कौलिकासिद्धिदम्॥४॥

अथाद्यस्तिथयः सर्वे स्वरा बिन्द्ववसानगाः।
तदन्तः कालयोगेन सोमसूर्यौ प्रकीर्तितौ॥५॥

पृथिव्यादीनि तत्त्वानि पुरुषान्तानि पञ्चसु।
क्रमात् कादिषु वर्गेषु मकारान्तेषु सुव्रते॥६॥

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1. Single line.
2. यदयं कौलिको विधिर्मम, G.
3. न संदेहः, G.

वाय्वग्निसलिलेन्द्राणां धारणानां चतुष्टयम्।
तदूर्ध्वं शादि विख्यातं पुरस्ताद् ब्रह्मपञ्चकम॥७॥

अमूला तत्क्रमाज्ज्ञेया क्षान्ता सृष्टिरुदाहृता।
सर्वेषामेव मन्त्राणां विद्यानां च यशस्विनि॥८॥

इयं योनिः समाख्याता सर्वतन्त्रेषु सर्वदा।
चतुर्दशयुतं भद्रे तिथीशान्तसमन्वितम्॥९॥

तृतीयं ब्रह्म सुश्रोणि हृदयं भैरवात्मनः।
एतन्नायोगिनीजातो नारुद्रो लभते स्फुटम॥१०॥

हृदयं देवदेवस्य सद्यो योगविमुक्तिदम्।
अस्योच्चारे कृते समयङ् मन्त्रमुद्रागणो महान्॥११॥

सद्यस्तन्मुखतामेति स्वदेहावेशलक्षणम्।
मुहूर्तं स्मरते यस्तु चुम्बकेनाभिमुद्रितः॥१२॥

स बध्नाति तदा सर्वं मन्त्रमुद्रागणं नरः।
अतीतानागतानर्थान् पृष्ठोऽसौ कथयत्यपि॥१३॥

प्रहराद्यदभिप्रेतं देवतारूपमुच्चरन्।
साक्षात्पश्यत्यसंदिग्धमाकृष्टं रुद्रशक्तिभिः॥१४॥

प्रहरद्वयमात्रेण व्योमस्थो जायते स्मरन्।
त्रयेण मातरः सर्वा योगीश्वर्यो[4] महाबलाः॥१५॥

वीरा वीरेश्वराः सिद्धा बलवाञ्छाकिनीगणः।
आगत्य समयं दत्त्वा भैरवेण प्रचोदिताः॥१६॥

यच्छन्ति परमां सिद्धिं फलं यद्वा समीहितम्।
अनेन सिद्धाः सेत्स्यन्ति साधयन्ति च मन्त्रिणः॥१७॥

यत्किंचिद्भैरवे तन्त्रे सर्वमस्मात्प्रसिद्ध्यति।
अदृष्टमण्डलोऽप्येवं ....॥१८॥[5]

4. योगेश्वर्यो, G.

5. Here the counting of the verses differs, Gnoli takes three lines in verse 18 = verse 19 in Jaideva Singh.

अदृष्टमण्डलोऽप्येवं यः कचिद्वेत्ति तत्त्वतः।
स सिद्धिभाग्भवेन्नित्यं स योगी स च दीक्षितः॥१९॥

अनेन ज्ञातमात्रेण ज्ञायते सर्वशक्तिभिः।
शाकिनीकुलसामान्यो भवेद्योगं विनापि हि॥२०॥

अविधिज्ञो विधानज्ञो जायते यजनं प्रति॥२१॥[6]

कालाग्निमादितः कृत्वा मायान्तं ब्रह्मदेहगम।
शिवो विश्वाद्यनन्तान्तः परं शक्तित्रयं मतम्॥२२॥

तदन्तर्वर्ति यत्किंचित् शुद्धमार्गे व्यवस्थितम्।
अणुर्विशुद्धमचिरादैश्वरंज्ञानमश्नुते॥२३॥

तच्चोदकः शिवोऽज्ञेय[7] सर्वज्ञः परमेश्वरः।
सर्वगो निर्मलः स्वच्छस्तृप्तः स्वायतनः शुचिः॥२४॥

यथा न्यग्रोधबीजस्थः शक्तिरूपो महाद्रुमः।
तथा हृदयबीजस्थं जगदेतच्चराचरम्॥२५॥

एवं यो वेत्ति तत्त्वेन तस्य निर्वाणमामिनी।
दीक्षा भवत्यसंद्धिग्धा तिलाज्याहुतिवर्जिता॥२६॥

मूर्ध्नि वक्त्रे च हृदये गुह्ये मूर्तौ तथैव च।
न्यासं कृत्वा शिखां बद्ध्वा सप्तविंशतिमन्त्रिताम्॥२७॥

एकैके तु दिशां बन्धं दशानामपि योजयेत्।
तालत्रयं पुरा दत्त्वा सशब्दं विघ्नशान्तये॥२८॥

शिखासंख्याभिजप्तेन तोयेनाभ्युक्षयेत् ततः
पुष्पादिके क्रमात्सर्वं लिङ्गे वा स्थण्डिलेऽथ वा॥२९॥

चतुर्दशाभिजप्तेन पुष्पेणासनकल्पना।
तत्र सृष्टिं यजेद्वीरः पुनरेवासनं ततः॥३०॥

सृष्टिं तु संपुटीकृत्य पश्चाद्यजनमारभेत्।
सर्वतत्त्वसुसंपूर्णां सर्वाभरणभूषिताम्॥३१॥

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6. One line counted as 20 by Gnoli.

7. शिवोज्ञेयः, G.

यजेद्देवीं महेशानीं सप्तविंशतिमन्त्रिताम्।
ततः सुगन्धिपुष्पैस्तु यथाशक्त्या समर्चयेत॥३२॥

पूजयेत्परया भक्त्या आत्मानं च निवेदयेत्।
एवं यजनमाख्यातमग्निकार्येऽप्ययं विधिः॥३३॥

कृतपूजाविधिः सम्यक् स्मरन् बीजं प्रसिद्ध्यति॥३४॥

आद्यन्तरहितं बीजं विकसत्तिथिमध्यगम्।
हृत्पद्मान्तर्गतं ध्यायेत् सोमांश नित्यमभ्यस्येत्॥३५॥

यान्यान्कामयते कामांस्तांस्ताञ्छीघ्रमवाप्नुयात्।
अस्मात्प्रत्यक्षतामेति सर्वज्ञत्वं न संशयः॥३६॥

एवं मन्त्रफलावाप्तिरित्येतद् रुद्रयामलम्।
एतदभ्यासतः सिद्धिः सर्वज्ञत्वमवाप्यते॥३७॥

Appendix II

List of Quotations in the Parātrīśikā Vivaraṇa

(*Page numbers from Jaideva Singh's edition*)

akāraḥ śiva ityukta-	Somānanda (*Vivṛti*)
ajñānācchaṅkate mūḍha-	Śrī Sarvācāra
athāsmākaṁ jñānaśakti-	*ŚD* 2.1
adyapi yanna viditaṁ	
anantaiḥ kuladehaistu	
anādare ṣaṣṭhī	*Pā* 2.3.38
anuttaraṁ tad hṛdayaṁ	Trikasāraśāstra
anekamekadhā kṛtvā	
. . . *aparasthitau*	*ŚD* 1.20
api tvātmabalasparśāt	*SpKā* 1.8
apravṛttasya hi praiṣe	*Vākyapadīya* 3.7.12
'a' bījaṁ śuddha śivarūpaṁ	Somānanda (*Vivṛti*)
aṣṭāṣṭakavibhedena	Śrī Trikaratnakula
asmadrūpasamāviṣṭaḥ	*ŚD* 1.1
ātmanāśrūyate yastu	*SvT* 2.146
ātmaiva sarvabhāveṣu	*ŚD* 1.2
ādyadhārikayā vyāptaṁ	*MVT* 2.50

ānandaprasaraḥ pūjā	*Trikatantrasāra*
āyudhānāṁ ca śaktīnām	*Śrī Trikahṛdaya*
ālāpād gātrasaṁsparśāt	
iti vā yasya saṁvittiḥ	*SpKā* 2.5
ityetanmātṛkācakraṁ	*Śrī Vājasaneya Tantra*
ityevaṁ sarvamāsanam	*MVT* 8.68
idamityasya vicchinna	*APS* 15
iyamevāmṛtaprāpti-	*SpKā* 2.7
īśvaraṁ ca mahāpretaṁ	*MVT* 8.68
uccāṭane kākavaktrāḥ	
udetyekaḥ samālokaḥ	*IPVV*, III
upāsādyāḥ samāpatti-	
e-okāragataṁ bījaṁ	*Vākyapadīya* 1.83
ekacintāprasaktasya	*SpKā* 3.9
ekameva hi tattattvaṁ	
ekvāraṁ pramāṇena	*ŚD* 7.6
ekaṁ vastu dvidhā bhūtaṁ	
ekaṁ sṛṣṭimayaṁ bījaṁ	*Kulacūḍāmaṇi śi vi* p. 58
evaṁ sarvāṇusaṁghāta-	*MVT* 3.34
aunmukhyābhāvatastasya	*ŚD* 1.25
. . . *karaṇānīva dehinām*	*SpKā* 2.10
kāmena kāmayet kāmān	*Vākyapadīya* 4.46
kālobhayāparicchinne	*Vādyatantraṁ*, 16
kulaparvaṁ na jānanti	
guruśiṣyapade sthitvā	*SvT* 8.31
glānirviluṇṭhikā dehe	*SpKā* 3.8

dhārayanti paśo pāśān	*Śrītantrasāra*
na tairvinā bhavecchabdo	
na puṁsi na pare tattve	quoted by Jayaratha on *TĀ* V.116
nara-śakti-śivāveśi	*Śrītantrasamuccaya*
na sā gīryā na hṛdayaṁga-magāminī	Abhinavagupta
nijottamāṅgacchāyātattvaṁ	*Śrītantrasāra*
nityaṁ visargaparamaḥ	*Trikahṛdaya*
nirodhinīmanuprāptaḥ	
nirvṛkṣagiribhittyādau	*VBh* 60
nilīnaśakti	*ŚD* 7.28
niṣkale padamekārṇaṁ	*MVT* 4.11
pañcavidhakṛtyatatpara-	Somānanda (*Vivṛti*)
pañcaviparyayabhedā	*SāKā* 47
padamādyaṁpṛthak sarvaṁ	*Vākyāpadīya* 2.2
paravyavasthāpi pare	
. . . *parātparataraṁ trikam*	
parāparāṅgasambhūtā	*MVT* 3.59
parāmṛtarasāpāya-	*SpKā* 3.14
paraiḥ saṁśrūyate yastu	*SvT* 2.147
paśurnityo hyamūrto 'jño	*Kiraṇāgama* 1.12
paśyatyanyacchṛṇotyanyat	*Śrīkaṇṭhapāda*
pīṭheśvaryo mahāghorā	*Timiroddhāra, Nityāṣoḍ* p. 28
peyāpeyaṁ smṛtā āpo	*Śrīsarvācāra*
prakāśamānābhāsaiva	*Śrīsiddhasantāna*

prakāśasyātmaviśrānti-	*APS* 22
praṇavordhvārdhamātrāto	*StC* 7
preyo 'pi sa bhavedyasya	*Śivadṛṣṭyālocana*
phe dharātattvamuddiṣṭaṁ	*MVT* 4.15
bījamantra śivaḥ śakti-	*MVT* 3.11
bījayonyātmakādbhedād	*MVT* 3.10-11
brahmādistambaparyante	*MVT* 1.40
bhagavatyā ratasthāyāḥ	Somānanda (*Vivṛti*)
bhagavadbhaktyāveśād	Abhinavagupta
bhāvanākaraṇābhyāṁ kiṁ	*ŚD* 7.101
bheditā tu yadā tena	*MVT* 3.58
bherīkāṁsyaninādo 'pi	
manuṣyadehamāsthāya	
mano 'pyanyatra nikṣiptaṁ	*SvT* 8.58
mantramaheśvareśatve	*MVT* 1.21
mantrāṇāṁ koṭayastisraḥ	*MVT* 1.41
mama yonirmahad brahma	*BhG* 14.3
malamajñānamicchanti	*MVT* 1.23
māyāvidye ubhe tasya	
māyopari mahāmāyā	*Śrīkubjikāmata* (*Khaṇḍacakra-vicāra*)
māyordhve śuddhavidyādhaḥ	
mṛcchailadhāturatnādi	*MVT* 18.1, 3
yata icchati tajñātuṁ	*ŚD* 1.19
yataḥ sarvaṁ . . .	*MBh* 12.36.18

. . . yatra trikāṇāṁ tritayaṁ samasti	Abhinavagupta
yatra sthitamidaṁ sarvaṁ	*SpKā* 1.2
yatsadāśivaparyantaṁ	*SvT* 5.5.48
yathecchābhyarthito dhātā	*SpKā* 3.1
yatheṣṭaphalasaṁsiddhyai	*MVT* 3.35-36
yadā tvekatra saṁrūḍha	*SpKā* 3.19
yannakiṁcana mameti dīnatāṁ	Abhinavagupta
yaśca sarvamayo nityaṁ	*MBh* 12.36.18
yasmātkṣaramatīto 'ham	*BhG* 15.18
yasminsarvaṁ	*MBh* 12.36.18
yaḥ sarvaṁ	*MBh* 12.36.18
yena rūpaṁ rasaṁ gandhaṁ	*KaṭhU* 2.1.3.
radanamūlamekeṣām	
raśrutisāmānyādvā siddham	Puṣpadanta
lehanāmanthanākoṭaiḥ	*VBh* 70
vahnerviṣasya madhye tu	*VBh* 68
vāmajaṅghānvito jīvaḥ	*MVT* 3.54
vāmamārgābhiṣikto 'pi	*Śrīniśācāra*
vāmamārgābhiṣikto 'pi	*Śrīsarvācāra*
vijñānakevalānaṣṭau	*MVT*
vitata iva nabhasyavicchidaiva	Abhinavagupta (Stotra)
viśvatra bhāvapaṭale	Abhinavagupta
viṣayeṣveva saṁlīnā	*MVT* 3.31
vīravrataṁ cābhinande	*Śrī Bhargaśikhā*

vedācchaiva tato vāmaṁ	
vyatireketarābhyāṁ hi	*APS* 12
śaktyo 'sya jagatkṛtsnaṁ	*Sarvamaṅgalāśāstra*
śaktisaṁgamasaṁkṣobha	*VBh* 69
śabdarāśisamutthasya	*SpKā* 3.13
śabdārthapratyayānā-	*YS* 3.17
śivaśaktisamāpattyā	*Śrītrikatantrasāra*
śiṣyeṇāpi tadā grāhya	*MVT* 3.57
ṣaṭtriṁśacchodhanīyāni	
sakramatvaṁ ca laukikyāḥ	*ĪPK* 2.1, 2
sa tayā saṁprabuddhaḥ san	*MVT* 3.27
. . . *sarvataśca yaḥ*	*MBh* 12.36.18
sarvabhūtasthamātmānaṁ	*BhG* 6.30
sarvaśāstrārthagarbhiṇyā	*MVT* 3.26
sarvārthasaṁkarṣaṇasaṁyamasya	*Kramastotra*
sarveṣāṁ cāpi yāgānāṁ	
sarvo mamāyaṁ vibhava	*ĪPK* 2.12
sa yadāste cidāhlāda	*ŚD* 1.3
sarva pañcātmakaṁ devi	
sa visargo mahādevi	
saṁbodhanādikaḥ prātipādikārthaḥ	
saṁrudhya raśmicakraṁ svaṁ	*Śrīvādyatantra*
saṁhatyakāritvāt	
sā tu saptadaśī devī	*Śrīvādyaśāstra*
sā trikoṇā mahāvidyā	

sā buddhiryatpunaḥ sūkṣmaṁ	*ŚD* 1.27
sārṇena tritayaṁ vyāptaṁ	*MVT* 4.25
sārṇenāṇḍatrayaṁ vyāptaṁ	*MVT* 4.25
sārdheṇāṇḍadvayaṁ vyāpta-	*MVT* 4.24
sukhe duḥkhe vimohe ca	*ŚD* 7.105
sunirbharatarāhlāda-	*ŚD* 7 (not found in the edited text)
susūkṣmaśaktitritaya	*ŚD* 1.4
. . . snehāt kaulikamādiśet	
spṛśyāspṛśyau smṛtau	*Śrīsarvācāra*
svatantraḥ paripūrṇo 'yaṁ	
svarūpāvaraṇe cāsya	*SpKā* 3.15
svātantryāmuktamātmānaṁ	*ĪPK* 1.5.16
hayo heṣati yadvacca	*Guhyayoginītantra*
havisarjanīyāvurasyāvekeṣām	
hṛdaye yaḥ sthito granthiḥ	*Trikasāraśāstra*
hṛdi ayo gamanaṁ jñānam	Somānanda (*Vivṛti*)

Appendix III

Stotra Fragments of Abhinavagupta quoted in the Vivaraṇa

KSTS, pp. 22-23; J.S., p. 8,

तदुक्तं मयैव स्तोत्रे -
वितत इव नभस्यविच्छिदैव
प्रतनु पतन्न विभाव्यते जलौघः।
उपवनतरुवेश्मनीघ्रभागा-
द्युपधिवेशन तु लक्ष्यते स्फुटं सः ।।इति।।
... तद्वत् परभैरवोऽतिसौक्ष्म्याद्
अनुभवगोचरमेति नैव जातु।।
अथ देशाकृतिकालसन्निवेश-
स्थितिसंस्पन्दितकारकत्वयोगाः।।
जनयन्त्यनुभाविनीं चितिं ते
झटिति न्यक्कृतभैरवीयबोधाः।।

Thin rain falling incessantly
is not perceptible in the vast expanse of the sky —
but it becomes clearly visible in the background of
trees of the forest and the roof of houses.
Even so the Supreme Bhairava,
who is extremely subtle
never appears within the range of experience.
But when associated with space, form, time,
order and state
that experiential awareness is generated in a moment
in those whose Divine Awareness was dormant.

KSTS, p. 59; J.S., p. 20

तदुक्तं मयैव स्तोत्रे -
यन्न किञ्चन ममेति दीनतां
प्राप्नुवन्ति जडजन्तवोऽनिशम्।
तन्न किञ्चन ममास्मि सर्वमि-
त्युद्धरां धुरमुपेयिवाहनम्।।

The thought "nothing is mine"
makes insentient beings miserable —
but (the same thought)
"nothing is mine"
means to me "I am everything."
Thus I have attained a lofty position.

KSTS, p. 80; J.S., p. 27

तदुक्तं मयैव –
न सा गीर्या न हृदयंगमगामिनी।

KSTS, p. 163; J.S., p. 57

तदुक्तं मयैव स्तोत्रे –
. . . यत्र त्रिकाणां त्रितयं समस्ति।

KSTS, p. 198; J.S., p. 68

तदुक्तं मयैव स्तोत्रे –
विश्वत्र भावपटले परिजृम्भमाणा
विच्छेदशून्यपरमार्थचमत्कृतिर्या।
तां पूर्णवृत्त्यहमिति प्रथनस्वभावां
स्वत्मस्थितिं स्वरसतः प्रणमामि देवीम्।।

In joy I bow to the Devī
whose wondrous delight blossoms everywhere
without break in the multitude of objects.
She is the I in the Fullness of being,
lustrous and illuminating all round.
Her abode is in one's own self.

KSTS, p. 222; J.S., p. 78

तदुक्तं मयैव स्तोत्रे –
भवद्भक्त्यावेशाद्विशदतरसंजातमनसां
क्षणेनैषावस्था स्फूटमधिवसत्येव हृदयम्।।

Those whose mind is made utterly pure
by total immersion in Your Love
their heart is clearly established in that state
in a moment.

Appendix IV

Comparison between the PT version of Vivaraṇa and Laghuvṛtti*

V = KSTS *Vivaraṇa*

L = KSTS *Laghuvṛtti*

S = Jaideva Singh

G = Nilkanth Gurtu

R = KSTS Lakshmirama (*Vivṛti*)

anuttaraṁ kathaṁ deva [VSG *sadyaḥ*] [L *svataḥ*]
kaulikasiddhidam ।
yena vijñātamātreṇa khecarīsamatāṁ vrajet ॥ 1 ॥

etad guhyaṁ mahāguhyaṁ [VL *kathaya sva*] [S *kathayasva*] [G *kathaya-sva*] *mama prabho* ।
hṛdayasthā tu yā Śaktiḥ [VSG *kaulikī*] [L *kaulinī*] *kulanāyikā* ॥ 2 ॥

tāṁ me kathaya deveśa yena tṛptiṁ [VGS *labhāmyaham*] [L *vrajāmyaham*]
śrībhairava uvāca ।
śṛṇu devi mahābhāge uttarasyāpyanuttaram ॥ 3 ॥

kauliko 'yaṁ vidhirdevi mama hṛdvyomnyavasthitaḥ
kathayāmi [VSG *sureśāni*] [L *na sandehaḥ*] *sadyaḥ kaulikasiddhidam* ॥ 4 ॥[1]

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* I am grateful to Mrinal Kaul for assisting me in compiling this comparison.

1. In L the order of verse 4 is changed. It reads *kathayāmi na sandehaḥ sadyaḥ kaulikasiddhidam* । *kauliko 'yaṁ vidhirdevi mama hṛdvyomnyavasthitaḥ* । ।

athādyāstithayaḥ [VSG *sarve*] [L *sarvāḥ*] *svarā* [VSG *bindvavasānagāḥ*] [L *bindvavasānakāḥ*] ।
tadantaḥ kālayogena somasūryau prakīrtitau ॥ 5 ॥

pṛthivyādīni tattvānī puruṣāntāni pañcasu ।
kramātkādiṣu vargeṣu makārānteṣu suvrate ॥ 6 ॥

vāyvagnisalilendrāṇāṁ dhāraṇānāṁ catuṣṭayam ।
tadūrdhve śādi vikhyātaṁ purastād brahmapañcakam ॥ 7 ॥

amūlā [V *tatkramāt*] [L *tatkramā*] *jñeyā kṣāntā sṛṣṭirudāhṛtā* ।
sarveṣām [V *eva*] [L *caiva*] *mantrāṇāṁ vidyānāṁ ca yaśasvini* ॥ 8 ॥

iyaṁ yoniḥ samākhyātā sarvatantreṣu sarvadā ।
caturdaśayutaṁ bhadre tithīśāntasamanvitam ॥ 9 ॥[2]

tṛtīyaṁ brahma suśroṇi hṛdayaṁ bhairavātmanaḥ ।
etannāyoginījāto nārudro labhate sphuṭam ॥ 10 ॥

hṛdayaṁ devadevasya sadyo [V *yogavimuktidam*] [L *yogavimokṣadam*] ।
asyoccāre kṛte samyaṅ mantramudrāgaṇo mahān ॥ 11 ॥

[V *sadyas*] [L *sadyaḥ*] [V *tanmukhatāmeti*] [L *sanmukhatāmeti*] *svadehāveśalakṣaṇam* ।
muhūrtaṁ smarate yastu [V *cumbakenābhimudritaḥ*] [L *cumbake nābhimudritaḥ*] ॥ 12 ॥

sa badhnāti tadā [V *sarvaṁ*] [L *dehaṁ*] *mantramudrāgaṇaṁ naraḥ*]
atītānāgatānarthān pṛṣṭo 'sau kathayatyapi ॥ 13 ॥

praharādyadabhipretaṁ devatārūpamuccaran ।
sākṣāt paśyatyasandigdhamākṛṣṭaṁ rudraśaktibhiḥ ॥ 14 ॥

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2. In L the line *iyaṁ yoniḥ samākhyātā sarvatantreṣu sarvadā* occurs as a part of verse eight. The ninth verse ends in: *tṛtīyaṁ brahma suśroṇi hṛdayaṁ bhairavātmanaḥ* which forms the first line of verse ten in V.

praharadvayamātreṇa vyomastho jāyate smaran |
trayeṇa mātaraḥ sarvā [V *yogīśvaryo*] [L *yogeśvaryo*] *mahābalāḥ* || 15 ||

vīrā vīreśvarāḥ siddhā [V *balavāñchākinīgaṇaḥ*] [L *balavān śākinīgaṇaḥ*] |
āgatya samayaṁ dattvā bhairaveṇa pracoditāḥ || 16 ||

yacchanti paramāṁ siddhiṁ phalaṁ yadvā samīhitam |
anena siddhāḥ setsyanti sādhayanti ca mantriṇaḥ || 17 ||[3]

yatkiṁcidbhairave tantre sarvamasmāt prasiddhyati |
adṛṣṭamaṇḍalo 'pyevaṁ .... || 18 ||[4]

adṛṣṭamaṇḍalo 'pyevaṁ yaḥ kaścidvetti tattvataḥ |
sa siddhibhāgbhavennityaṁ sa yogī sa ca dīkṣitaḥ || 19 ||[5]

anena jñātamātreṇa jñāyate sarvaśaktibhiḥ |
śākinīkulasāmānyo bhavedyogaṁ vināpi hi || 20 ||

avidhijño vidhānajño jāyate yajanaṁ prati |[6]
kālāgnimāditaḥ kṛtvā māyāntaṁ brahmadehagam || 21 ||

śivo viśvādyanantāntaḥ paraṁ śaktitrayaṁ matam || 22 ||

tadantarvarti yatkiṁcicchuddhamārge[7] *vyavasthitam |*
aṇurviśuddhamacirādaiśvaraṁ jñānamaśnute || 23 ||

taccodakaḥ śivo jñeyaḥ sarvajñaḥ parameśvaraḥ |
sarvago nirmalaḥ svacchastṛptaḥ svāyatanaḥ śuciḥ || 24 ||

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3. In L. Verse 17 has only one line.
4. Here L has rather retained the text of 18cd: *mantravīryasamāveśaprabhāvānna niyantraṇā* | The KSTS edition of L also records the variant reading as *mantravīryasamāveśe na kadācinniyantraṇā* |
5. The KSTS edition of V has numbered two verses as 18. The above-mentioned verse 19 is mentioned in V as 18. Numbering amended in Jaideva Singh's edition.
6. V gives this line as verse 20 having only cd.
7. Verse 22 ends here in V. The overlapping of lines continues. We follow the counting in V (S).

yathā nyagrodhabījasthaḥ śaktirūpo mahādrumaḥ ।
tathā hṛdyabījasthaṁ jagadetaccarācaram ॥ 25 ॥

evaṁ yo vetti tattvena tasya nirvāṇagāminī ।
dīkṣā bhavatyasandigdhā tilājyāhutivarjitā ॥ 26 ॥

mūrdhni vaktre ca hṛdaye guhye mūrtau tathaiva ca ।
nyāsaṁ kṛtvā śikhāṁ badhvā saptaviṁśatimantritām ॥ 27 ॥

[V *ekaikam tu*] [L *ekaikena*] *diśāṁ bandhaṁ daśānāmapi*
[V *yojayet*] [L *kārayet*] ।
tālatrayaṁ purā dattvā saśabdaṁ vighnaśāntaye ॥ 28 ॥

śikhāsaṁkhyābhijaptena toyenābhyukṣayettataḥ ।
puṣpādikaṁ kramātsarvaṁ [V *liṅge*] [L *liṅgaṁ*] *vā* [V
sthaṇḍile 'tha] [L *sthaṇḍilañca*] *vā* ॥ 29 ॥

caturdaśābhijaptena puṣpeṇāsanakalpanā ।
tatra sṛṣṭiṁ yajed vīraḥ punarevāsanaṁ tataḥ ॥ 30 ॥

sṛṣṭiṁ tu saṁpuṭīkṛtya paścādyajanamārabhet ।
sarvatattvasusaṁpūrṇā [V *sarvābharaṇabhūṣitām*]
[L *sarvāvayavaśobhitām*] ॥ 31 ॥

yajed devīṁ [V *maheśānīm*] [L *mahābhāgāṁ*] *saptaviṁśatimantritām* ।
tataḥ sugandhi [V *puṣpaistu*] [L *puṣpaiśca*] *yathāśaktyā samarcayet* ॥ 32 ॥

pūjayet parayā bhaktyā [V *ātmānaṁ*] [L *svātmānaṁ*] *ca nivedayet* ।
evaṁ yajanamākhyātamagnikārye 'pyayaṁ vidhiḥ ॥ 33 ॥

kṛtapūjāvidhiḥ samyak smaran bījaṁ prasiddhyati || 34 ||[8]

ādyantarahitaṁ bījaṁ vikasattithimadhyagam |
hṛtpadmāntargataṁ dhyāyet [V *somāṁśaṁ*] [L *somāṁśuṁ*]
nityamabhyaset || 35 ||

yānyān kāmayate kāmāṁstāntāñchīghramavāpnuyāt |
[V *asmā*] [L *ajñaḥ*] *pratyakṣatāmeti sarvajñatvaṁ na saṁśayaḥ* || 36 ||

evaṁ mantraphalāvāptirityetadrudrayāmalam |
etadabhyasyataḥ siddhiḥ sarvajñatvam [V *avāpyate*] [L *avāpnuyāt*] || 37 ||

[L *samāptā iyamanuttaratattvavimarśinī parātrīśikālaghuvṛttiḥ*]

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8. Only one line in V. L has the two lines as 33: *evaṁ yajanamākhyātamagnikārye 'pyayaṁ vidhiḥ* | *kṛtapūjāvidhiḥ saṁyak smaran bījaṁ prasiddhyati* |

Appendix V

Abhinavagupta's Anuttarāṣṭikā

Eight Verses on the Unsurpassable

अनुत्तराष्टिका[1]

संक्रामोऽत्र[2] न भावना न च कथायुक्तिर्न चर्चा न च
ध्यानं वा न च धारणा न च जपाभ्यासप्रयासो न च।
तत्किं नाम सुनिश्चितं वद परं सत्यं च तच्छ्रूयतां
न त्यागी न परिग्रही भज सुखं सर्वं यथावस्थितः॥१॥

संसारोऽस्ति न तत्त्वतस्तनुभृतां बन्धस्य वार्तैव का[3]
बन्धो यस्य न जातु तस्य वितथा मुक्तस्य मुक्तिक्रिया।
मिथ्यामोहकृदेष रज्जुभुजगच्छायापिशाचभ्रमो
मा किंचित्त्यज मा गृहाण विलस[4] स्वस्थो यथावस्थितः॥२॥

पूजापूजकपूज्यभेदसरणिः केयं कथानुत्तरे
संक्रामः[5] किल कस्य केन विदधे को वा प्रवेशक्रमः।
मायेयं न चिदद्वयात्परतया भिन्नाप्यहो वर्तते
सर्वं स्वानुभवस्वभावविमलं चिन्तां वृथा मा कृथाः॥३॥

आनन्दोऽत्र न वित्तमद्यदवन्नैवाङ्गनासङ्गवत्
दीपार्केन्दुकृतप्रभाप्रकरवन् नैव प्रकाशोदयः।
हर्षः संभृतभेदमुक्तिसुखभूर्भारावतारोपमः
सर्वाद्वैतपदस्य विस्मृतनिधेः प्राप्तिः प्रकाशोदयः॥४॥

रागद्वेषसुखासुखोदयलयाहङ्कारदैन्यादयो
ये भावाः प्रविभान्ति विश्ववपुषो भिन्नस्वभावा न ते।
व्यक्तिं पश्यसि यस्य यस्य सहसा तत्तत्तदेकात्मता-
संविद्रूपमवेक्ष्य किं न रमसे तद्भावनानिर्भरः॥५॥

पूर्वाभावभवक्रिया हि सहसा भावाः सदाऽस्मिन्भवे
मध्याकारविकारसङ्करवतां तेषां कुतः सत्यता।
निःसत्ये चपले प्रपञ्चनिचये स्वप्नभ्रमे पेशले
शङ्कातङ्ककलङ्कयुक्तिकलनानीतः प्रबुद्धो भव॥६॥

भावानां न समुद्भवोऽस्ति सहजस्त्वद्भाविता भान्त्यमी
निःसत्या अपि सतयतामनुभवभ्रान्त्या भजन्ति क्षणम्।
त्वत्सङ्कल्पज एष विश्वमहिमा नास्त्यस्य जन्मान्यतः
तस्मात्त्वं विभवेन भासि भुवनेष्वेकोप्यनेकात्मकः॥७॥

यत्सत्यं यदसत्यमल्पबहुलं नित्यं न नित्यं च यत्
यन्मायामलिनं यदात्मविमलं चिद्दर्पणे[6] राजते॥
तत्सर्वं स्वविमर्शसंविदुदयाद रूपप्रकाशात्मकं
ज्ञात्वा स्वानुभवाधिरूढमहिमा विश्वश्वेरत्वं भज॥८॥

॥ इति श्रीमदाचार्याभिनवगुप्तपादैर्विरचितानुत्तराष्टिका समाप्ता ॥

References

1. First published by K.C. Pandey, *Abhinavagupta*, Appendix C.
2. संकामो न न MSS.
3. जपाभ्यासः प्रयासो MSS.
4. विहर MS.A.
5. संज्ञासत्किल MS, B.
6. चिद्धर्षणे राजसे MSS.

Abhinavagupta: Anuttarāṣṭikā
English Translation

Tr. Bettina Bäumer[1]

1. There is no need of spiritual progress,
nor of contemplation, disputation or discussion,
nor meditation, concentration nor even the effort of prayer.
Please tell me clearly: What is supreme Truth?
Listen: Neither renounce nor possess anything,
share in the joy of the total Reality
and be as you are!

2. In reality no world of transmigration exists,
so how can one talk about bondage?
To try to liberate one free already
is futile, for he was never in bondage.
All this just creates a delusion like that
of the shadow of a ghost or a rope mistaken for a snake.
So neither renounce nor possess anything.
Enjoy yourself freely, resting in your self,
just as you are!

3. What words can describe the Unsurpassable? In the Absolute
can there be any distinction between the worship,
the one who worships and the object of worship?
How and in whom can there be spiritual progress?
What are the degrees of absorption?
Illusion itself is ultimately the same

as non-dual Consciousness, all being the pure
nature of the Self, experienced by oneself —
so have no vain anxiety!

4. This bliss is not comparable to that which is experienced
through riches or wine or even union with the beloved.
The dawning of that Light is not to be compared
with the light of a lamp or that of sun or moon.
The joy that is felt when one is freed from the burden
of accumulated differences[2] can only be compared
to the relief felt while setting on the ground a heavy weight.
The dawning of the Light is like finding a lost treasure:
the state of universal non-duality.

5. All states of mind like love and hatred, pleasure and pain,
arising and disappearing, to you appear distinct.
They are, however, part of the universal body,
their nature is not separate. Whenever you observe
any one of them arising, at once become aware
of their oneness, contemplate in them the form of pure Consciousness.
Filled with this contemplation, will you not experience joy?

6. The non-existent suddenly is brought into existence;
such are always the states of being in this world.
How, being intermingled due to deformation
of the intermediate state, can they possess any reality?
How to find reality in the unreal, unstable,
in multiplicity of worldly things, a dream's confusion
or in deceptive beauty? Transcend the impurity
that causes doubt and fear and awaken!

7. It is not the Innate Being that gives rise to these various
states. They appear, created by you. Though unreal,
they become real through a momentary confused perception.
The glory of this universe is born from your will.

It has no other origin. Therefore your glory
shines in all the worlds. Though one you have many forms.

8. Both the real and the unreal, the simple and the complex,
the eternal and the temporal, that which, due to illusion,
is impure and also the purity of the Self —
all shine in the mirror of Consciousness. All this
is seen as having the nature of pure light,
as consciousness arises in self-awareness.
Recognising your glory rooted in your own experience,
share in the universal power of the Lord!

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1. I thank the late Mrs. Mary Rogers for giving poetic form to my translation.
2. *Bheda*: divisions, separation, duality.

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